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Haircut 100

WORLD EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

NICK HEYWARD & CO ON THEIR 2023 REUNION AND PELICAN WEST POMP: "WE BURNED LIKE A COMET!"

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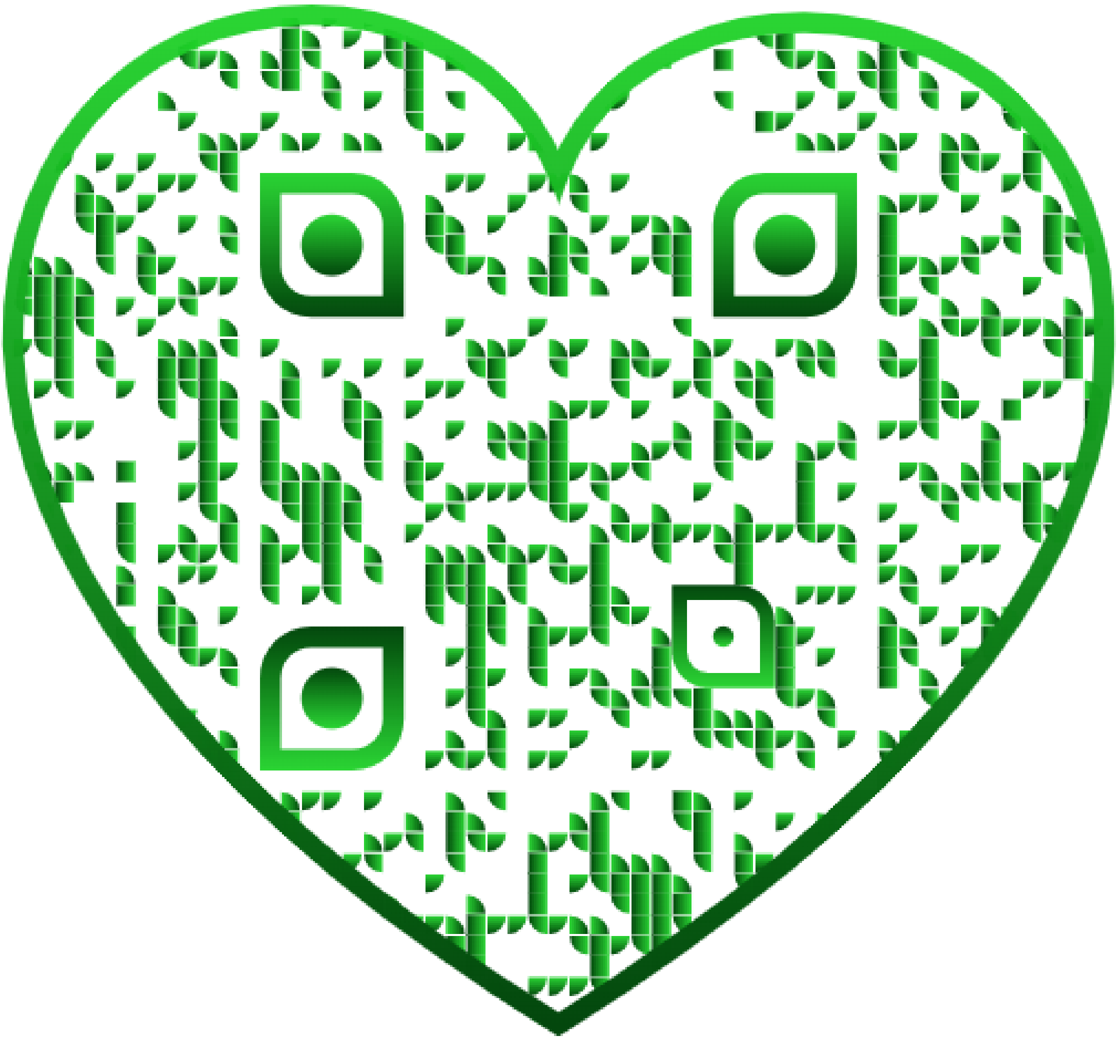

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WELCOME

When the news broke last November that Haircut 100 would be reuniting for a one-off show at Shepherd's Bush Empire this May to mark the 40th (pandemic adjusted) anniversary of their debut album, *Pelican West*, it was met with nothing short of a feeding frenzy by all manner of music fans.

The feverish reaction to the news can be explained by several defining factors. That remarkable debut studio LP is a much-loved classic from our favourite decade of music, of course, but there's also a sense of unfinished business at play here. Just how far could the Haircuts have gone if they'd managed to hold it together with frontman and songwriter Nick Heyward?

80

For our world exclusive cover feature this issue we catch up with the band to hear about their genesis story – chunky knit sweaters, kung fu movie soundtracks, sou'westers 'n' all. Even by the individualistic standards of the 80s, nobody sounded or looked remotely like Haircut 100. They were a band apart – and that's been the story in the ensuing decades, too.

We'll never know what the Haircuts would have done with the batch of Heyward songs that eventually ended up on his first solo outing, *North Of A Miracle*. But in just one of the many revelations that come out in our interviews, Nick tells us he's currently writing new material, which could end up forming the basis of a new Haircut 100 band project. It's a mouth-watering prospect.

Elsewhere this issue, *Classic Pop* pays a heartfelt in-depth tribute to the much-missed Terry Hall. While his work with The Specials has cemented his legend as one of the most important songwriters this country has ever produced, we wanted to expand upon that and shine a light on his days with the Fun Boy Three. Helping us celebrate Terry's legacy are bandmates Neville Staple and Lynval Golding who salute his talents alongside an array of famous friends.

Finally, I've been waiting for the right moment to roll out a career retrospective of one of my favourite singer-songwriters in these pages and Robert Palmer's time in the sun is now upon us. Tying in with a new boxset that covers the nine albums he recorded for the venerable Island label, we get to argue the case for a man who proved David Bowie wasn't the only shape-shifting artist who could skip across genres with consummate ease.

Enjoy the issue!

Steve Harnell, Editor

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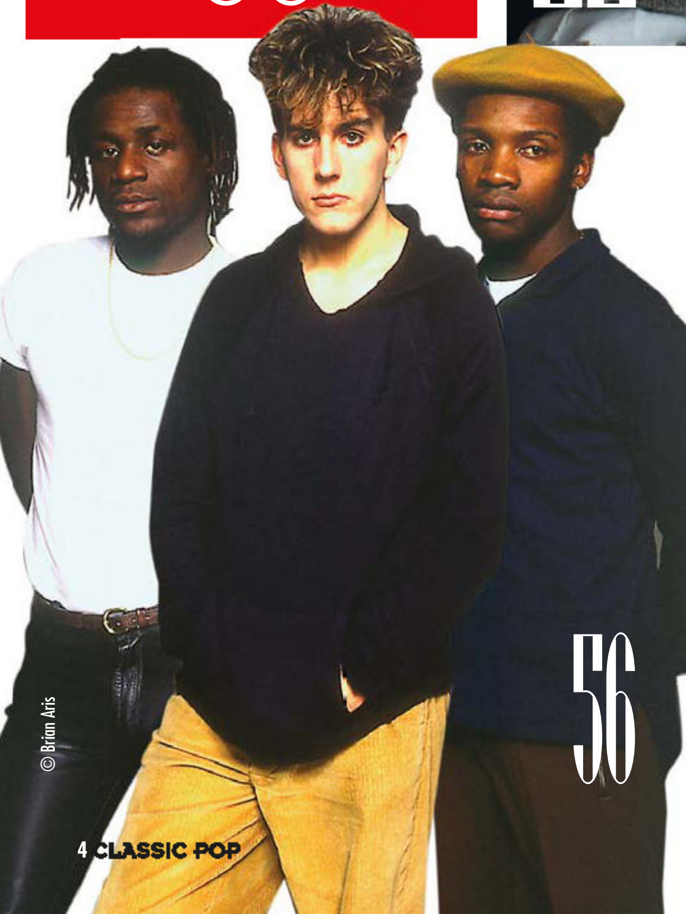
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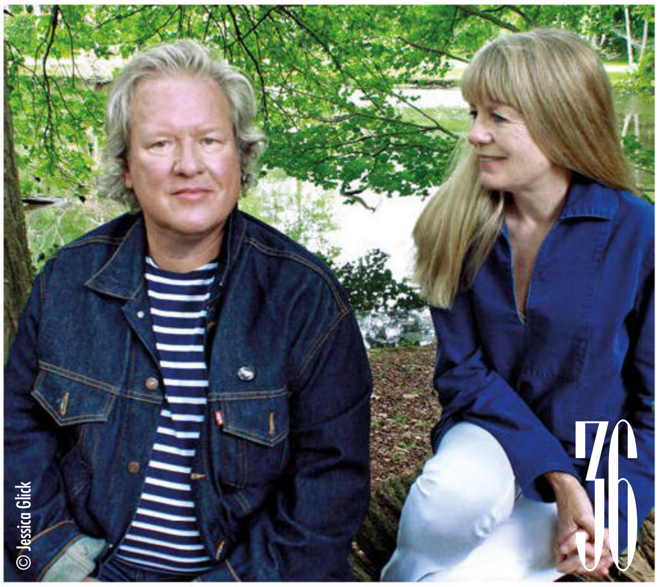

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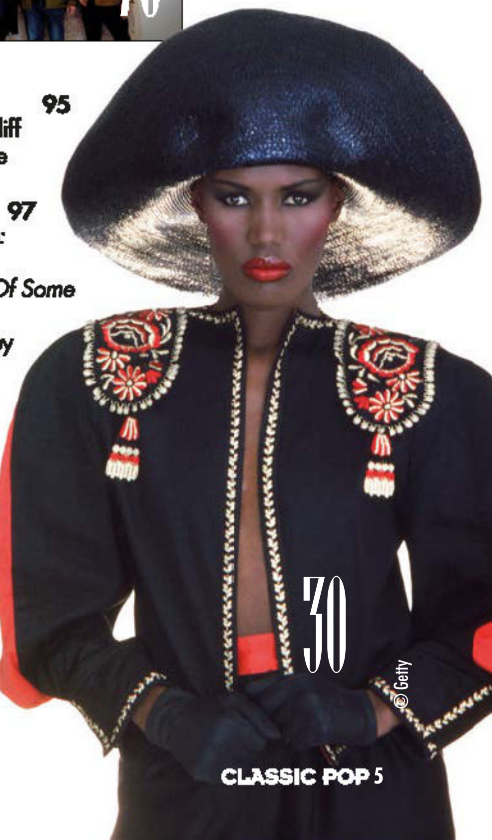

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WHICH BAND IS TOP OF YOUR REUNION WISHLIST?

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*1 "Forget Moz, there's still unfinished business with Johnny Marr's more sensible writing partner – Bernard Sumner."

*2 "Preferably *Steve McQueen* played from start to finish."

*3 "I'll take just Morrissey and Marr, but in my dreams it's the original foursome."

*4 "So many of the great *Classic Pop* bands speak about Japan in hushed tones, it'd be great to see what the reality was like."

*5 "Who wouldn't love to see the John Foxx lineup do *Systems Of Romance*?"

*6 "First half *Hats* in its entirety, second half the best of the rest. Is that so much to ask?"

*7 "Forty years on from the release of *Hand In Glove*, now's the perfect time to announce that reunion tour… but we all know that it's never going to happen."

*8 "When they finally do their homecoming gig in Hull it should be declared a public holiday."

*9 "Just imagine *Welcome To The Pleasuredome*, start to end!"

*10 "The darkwave synth-punk innovators deserve a victory lap."

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OUR CONTRIBUTORS

The winner of the Best Writer, Specialist category, in 2022's British Society of Magazine Editors Awards, for our latest issue **John Earls** catches up with Haircut 100 for our world exclusive cover feature and meets Chris Frantz and Tina Weymouth before overseeeing our new albums and reissues reviews sections.

Dan Biggane grew up in Coventry and will probably tell you his first records were by The Clash or The Specials, when in reality it was Suzanne Vega and Martika. In this issue, he reviews The Cure's Cardiff live show and talks to Lynval Golding and Neville Staple about Fun Boy Three while reflecting on the premature passing of Terry Hall with Rhoda Dakar and The Beat's Dave Wakeling.

Mark Lindores grew up during the golden age of pop magazines, devouring the likes of *Smash Hits* and *Number One*. He now writes about the artists he used to read about for *Classic Pop*, *Total Film* and *Mixmag*. This issue, Mark serves up his album-by-album guide to the back catalogue of Kylie Minogue and also helms our book reviews section.

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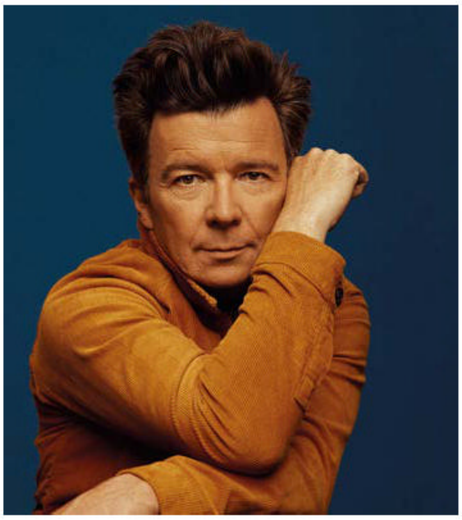
POP UP



Rick Astley takes legal action against Yung Gravy

Rick Astley has filed a lawsuit against Matthew Hauri, aka Yung Gravy, accusing the rapper of using an impersonation of his voice on the song *Betty (Get Money)*. The track, released in 2022, borrowed heavily from Astley's signature hit, *Never Gonna Give You Up*. Though Astley doesn't appear, the song does feature singer Popnick's near-perfect impersonation of the SAW veteran. Astley is claiming the use of the impersonator is illegal. "In an effort to capitalise off the immense popularity and goodwill of Mr Astley, defendants... conspired to include a deliberate and nearly indistinguishable imitation of Mr Astley's voice," the lawsuit states. Astley's lawsuit seeks "millions of dollars" in damages, as well as profits from the song.

OMD to celebrate 40 years of *Dazzle Ships*

Orchestral Manoeuvres In The Dark have shared details of a new expanded version of their fourth album, *Dazzle Ships*. Set for release on 31 March, the 40th anniversary edition comprises the original album, plus a bonus LP of unreleased demos and rarities compiled and mixed by Paul Humphreys. There will be two sets available – one in the original bespoke die-cut sleeve on 180g black vinyl, and a second in a standard gatefold sleeve, on silver and blue vinyl.

The duo will also be back on the road this summer for a string of UK festival dates, including Let's Rock The Moor! on 20 May, Let's Rock The North East on 10 June, Let's Rock Leeds on 17 June, Let's Rock Exeter on 1 July, Chilfest on 8 July and Audley End House & Gardens in Saffron Walden on 11 August.

© Ricardo Gomes

MADONNA SET FOR EPIC CELEBRATION WORLD TOUR

Madonna has announced a globe-spanning trek celebrating her 40 years as a recording artist. Titled The Celebration Tour, a total of 72 dates have already been announced, kicking off at the Rogers Arena in Vancouver, Canada, on 15 July, and continuing through to the winter and climaxing at the KIA Forum in Inglewood, California, on 8 January 2024.

The world tour was announced in a specially-lensed clip, echoing the Material Girl's infamous 1991 documentary, *Truth Or Dare* (*In Bed With Madonna* on these shores). In the video, various celebrities including Jack Black, Judd Apatow, Amy Schumer and Lil Wayne play a game of truth or dare with the singer which culminates in Schumer challenging the Queen of Pop to play a greatest hits world tour.

The Celebration Tour will, a statement says, "take us on Madonna's artistic journey through four decades and pays respect to the city of New York where her career in music began."

"I am excited to explore as many songs as possible," added Madonna, "in hopes to give my fans the show they have been waiting for."

The tour hits more than 30 cities and features stops in Chicago, Detroit, New York, Miami and Los Angeles before making its way to Europe where Madonna will play a further 11 cities including London, Barcelona, Paris and Stockholm. The concerts will be the singer's first performances in the UK since her 12-date residency at the London Palladium in early 2020. Tickets are available from madonna.com/tour.

In other Madonna news, her long-mooted biopic has been scrapped at Universal Pictures, according to industry bible *Variety*.

First announced in 2020, the film was to have been directed by Madonna, and would have starred *Inventing Anna* and *Ozark*'s Julia Garner in the title role. Garner beat names such as Florence Pugh, Sydney Sweeney, Alexa Demie, Odessa Young and Bebe Rexha to the part. *Juno*'s Diablo Cody was attached to write the script.

Previous films to have been directed by Madonna, include 2008's *Filth And Wisdom*, a UK-set comedy-drama, as well as 2011's *W.E.*, a poorly-received dramatisation of King Edward VIII's relationship with American divorcee Wallis Simpson.

According to *The US Sun*, it was the singer's insistence on "near-total" control of the project as well as her… "interesting" posts on social media, one of which showed her licking water out of a dog bowl, that led to the studio nixing the project. "She signed a contract to make this film and that should have been the signal to her to stop the circus antics, stop chasing likes, and just buckle down and get this movie into shape," a source told the newspaper. "Her funny Instagram posts are always catnip for her die-hard fans but they didn't play well at Universal."

Of course, it's entirely possible that another studio may pick up the project in the near future, so watch this space.

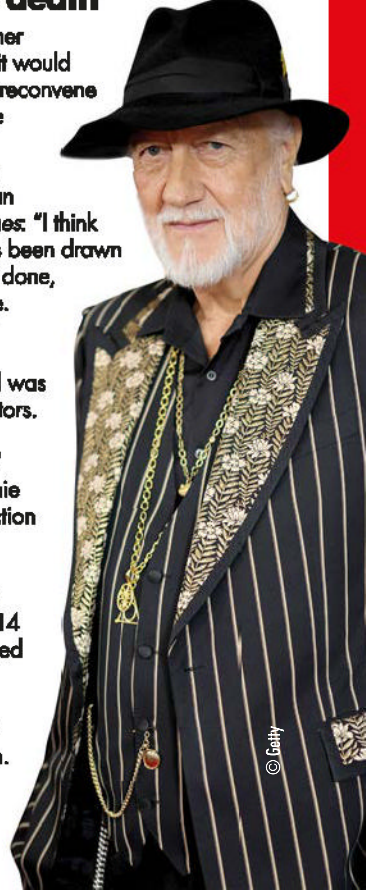
BETTER LATTE THAN NEVER FOR SPARKS' RETURN TO ISLAND LABEL

Sparks have announced that they are returning to Island Records for their next studio album, *The Girl Is Crying In Her Latte*. The LP, their 26th, will be the duo's first for the label since 1976's *Big Beat*.

"Funny how things work!" say the brothers Mael. "One of the most memorable periods for Sparks, the one that forever cemented our relationship with the UK and also exposed Sparks to a bigger audience around the world, was the 70s Island Records era. And here we find ourselves in 2023, almost 50 years later, re-signing with Island again with an album that we all feel is as bold and uncompromising as anything we did back then, or for that matter, anytime throughout our career. We're happy that after so much time, we've reconnected with Island, sharing the same spirit of adventure that we all had way back when, but with our new album, *The Girl Is Crying In Her Latte*."

To coincide with the album's release on 26 May, the pair will take to the road for a major tour. It'll kick off at Oxford's New Theatre on 23 May, before heading to Liverpool, Glasgow and Manchester, with the UK leg concluding with two shows at London's Royal Albert Hall on 29 and 30 May. The tour then continues around Europe before making its way to North America. Tickets are available from allsparks.com/#tour.

Future of Fleetwood Mac in doubt after McVie's death



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Fleetwood Mac mainstay, drummer Mick Fleetwood, has stated that it would be "unthinkable" for the band to reconvene after the recent death of Christine McVie in November last year.

Speaking at the 65th Grammy Awards on 5 February, the veteran drummer told the *Los Angeles Times*: "I think right now, the line in the sand has been drawn after the loss of Chris. I say we're done, but then we've all said that before. It's sort of unthinkable right now."

Fleetwood vowed to continue performing outside the band and was on the lookout for new collaborators.

The drummer performed the Christine McVie-written *Songbird* alongside Sheryl Crow and Bonnie Raitt during the In Memoriam section of the Grammys.

After a lengthy hiatus from Fleetwood Mac, Christine McVie rejoined the band formally in 2014 – its latest incarnation also featured Neil Finn and Mike Campbell, the latter duo completing the lineup following the acrimonious departure of Lindsey Buckingham.

21st Century Boys (L-R): Robert Hodgens with fellow Bluebells, brothers David and Ken McCluskey

Q+A

ROBERT HODGENS (THE BLUEBELLS)

BOBBY BLUEBELL ON HIS BAND'S BELATED RETURN AND WHY THEIR MOST FAMOUS HIT HAS A "DIFFERENT RESONANCE" FOR HIM NOW

BETH SIMPSON

Most musicians count themselves lucky if their songs strike a chord with the public once, but Glaswegian indie doyens The Bluebells are among the select few who've been pop stars twice over: once in the mid-80s before a Volkswagen TV ad catapulted their most famous hit to No.1 almost a decade later. Now they're back again with a belated follow-up to their only album, 1984's *Sisters*. Shaggy-haired mainman Robert Hodgens explains what they've been doing in the interim and why he's not embarrassed about *that* song.

So after nearly 40 years why do another album?
We'd been back performing gigs for a few years, doing lots of festivals and that. But after a while you think, 'It would be nice to have new songs to play other than the same old ones'. Plus I'd had a few I'd done over that period and thought it was time to record them. We've got this great record company up here called Last Night From Glasgow, which put out a reissue of *Sisters* a couple of years back. They convinced us that we should release a new album.

For this album did you just dip back into that existing pile or write specifically for the project?
I tried my best to avoid that. That's why we've called the album *In The 21st Century*.
I thought it would be like, if we were starting now what would we sound like? If you're an artist or a songwriter you have different things to write about now. We were an up-and-coming band then but now we're older men with families, you know?

So who is in the line-up these days?
There's myself and the McCluskeys [Ken, vocals and Dave, drums] still. We've got Campbell Owens from Aztec Camera on bass, and Mick Slaven and Douglas MacIntyre on guitars. We've got a great wee band now.

How would your 80s selves have reacted if you'd been told back then that an album called *The Bluebells In the 21st Century* would be the follow-up to *Sisters*?
The thing is, at the time no band in Glasgow thought they would last more than six months. None of us had any concept of the future. There was no career path, for us or Orange Juice, Altered Images or anybody. There was no idea that we'd still be doing this 40 years later. You take each day as it comes and then suddenly, boom, you're in 2023!

***Sisters* has had a lot of retrospective praise over the last few years. Was that a factor in your return?**
It has, hasn't it? The trouble if you have a big hit like *Young At Heart* is that you end up in that *Agadoo* category, where people are dismissive of it. Originally we were – for want of a better word – quite a cool band in Glasgow. That hit came retrospectively for us. It sold a phenomenal amount of records. Everywhere you went you heard it.

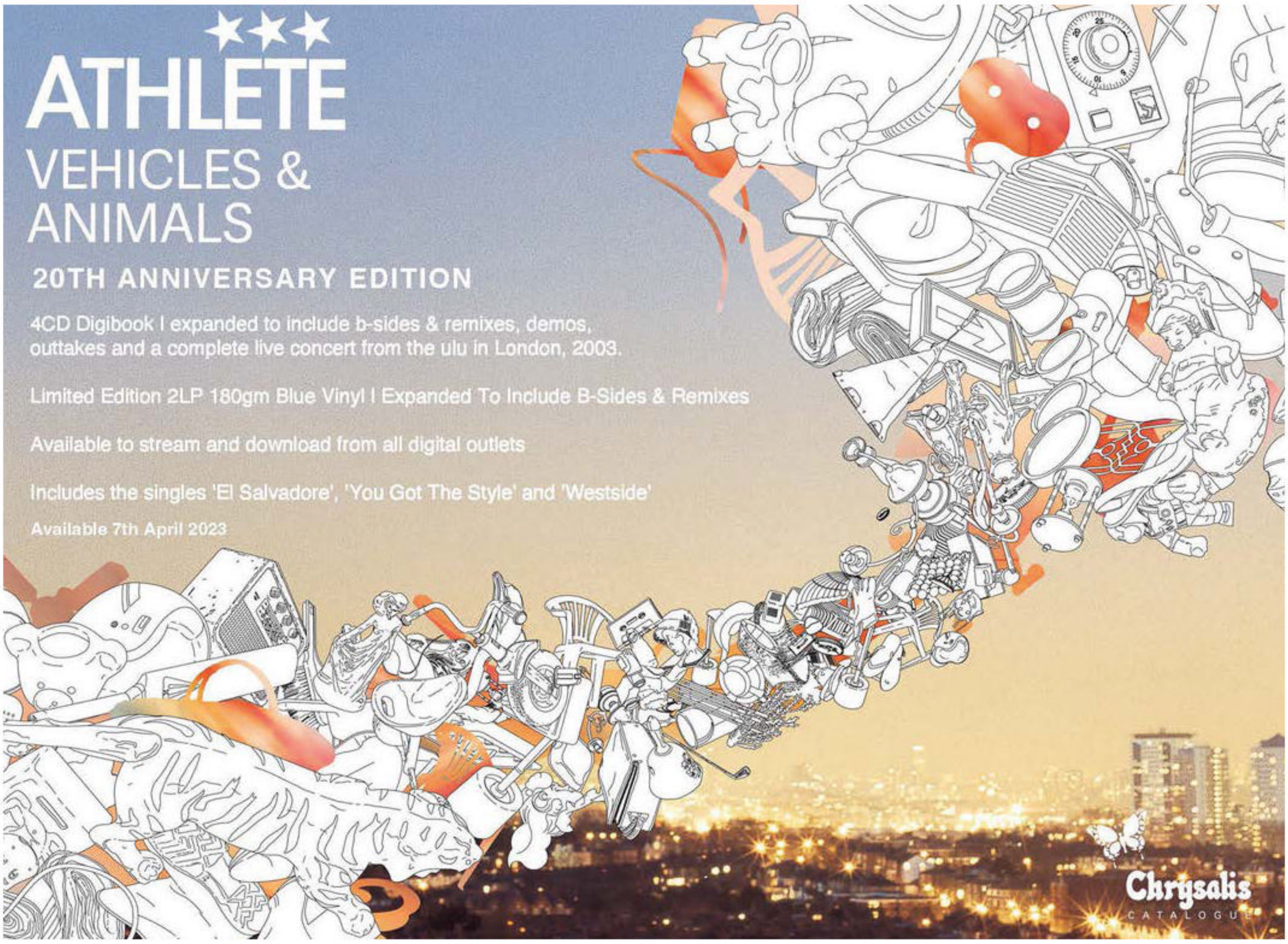
Seeing as we're talking about it, what are your feelings about *Young At Heart* these days?
I realise it's got a lot of power. For me, the song is about my mum and dad and how you never really appreciated them the way that you should. Now we've got our own children the song has a different kind of resonance for me. But even now, with all the twists, the court case [Bobby Valentino, who added the distinctive violin riff to The Bluebells' version, won himself a songwriting credit in 2002] and everything, I still think 'how the hell did all that happen?'

When *Young At Heart* was a hit the second time around in 1993, did you think about capitalising on it and getting back together full-time then?
There wasn't a chance at the time. Our bassist Lawrence Donegan was working full-time for *The Guardian*. Dave [McCluskey] was working with handicapped children. I was songwriting. We all had other things going on.

You mentioned your songwriting but in the time since then what else have you been up to?
I was in a band called The Poems that got signed to Sony in North America. Mostly I was songwriting, with people like Texas and with Siobhan Fahey and Shakespears Sister. I worked for Pete Tong – he was in A&R for London Records and I worked under him. I was DJing for a while, too, and playing a lot of techno actually! Glasgow is a real techno kind of place.

You're releasing the new album on a Glasgow label, a recent single of yours was called *Glasgow Is A Rainbow*... What is it about the city that means it tends to keep its musicians?
It's supportive and there are plenty of places to hide if you want to hide. Though if you want to mingle and be involved in the music business I wouldn't recommend anywhere else. It's a fantastic place. It's staggering the amount of people who have remained. We all like our trips to London and New York, but there is a certain tempo to Glasgow that keeps people there. ■

● ***The Bluebells In The 21st Century* is released via Last Night From Glasgow on 24 March and reviewed on page 81**



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1 HIT WONDER

FUNKYTOWN
LIPPS INC

There may have been a disco backlash in 1980, but *Funkytown* was instantly and utterly irresistible. An absolute masterpiece of pop songwriting, it was always going to avoid the vinyl bonfires.

Lipps Inc, pun intended, were formed in 1979 by Minnesota DJ Steven Greenberg. *Funkytown* had everything to make it a staple of both dancefloor and radio – instant earworm intro, easy to recall lyrics, singalong bridge, infectious chorus, all sung in a kooky, endearingly disinterested way by Cynthia Johnson. It's a very simple record but that does it great credit, boasting the kind of melody and structure that a career composer should have found 20 years earlier.

Disco may have allegedly sucked at the time, but *Funkytown*, from debut album *Mouth To Mouth*, still took the world's charts by storm. It went to No.1 in 28 countries, including the States, while it spent a fortnight at UK No.2, held off by Don McLean's cover of *Crying*, which presumably the British branch of the anti-disco movement were thrilled to bits about.

Subsequent singles, plus all four albums, didn't chart in the UK. Lipps Inc split in 1985, and two years later, Aussie new wave pedestrians Pseudo Echo took a rocky (and unnecessary) cover of *Funkytown* (now *Funky Town*) into the Top 10, meaning two artists had become one-hit wonders in the UK with the same song.

Matthew Rudd is the host of Forgotten 80s on Absolute 80s

POP UP

© Getty

OBITUARY
TOM VERLAINE

13 DECEMBER 1949 – 28 JANUARY 2023

Tom Verlaine, frontman of US punk pioneers Television, has died at the age of 73.

Best remembered for their debut album *Marquee Moon*, Television were among the first wave of American punk groups, regularly playing at New York's legendary CBGB club.

Born Thomas Miller in Denville, New Jersey, Verlaine – his surname being a reference to the French symbolist poet Paul Verlaine – formed his first band, The Neon Boys, in 1972 with school friend Richard Meyers, by then called Richard Hell. The Neon Boys would eventually metamorphose into Television and by 1974 were playing some of New York City's hippest joints, including CBGB and Max's Kansas City.

After seeing a performance by the group in the mid-70s, David Bowie (who covered Verlaine's *Kingdom Come* on 1980's *Scary Monsters (And Super Creeps)* album) called them "the most original band I've seen in New York."

Television released their first album, *Marquee Moon*, in 1977. Though that LP and its follow-up a year later, *Adventure*, were critically lauded, both sold poorly in the US. The band split up shortly after its release. In the years after, Verlaine put out a number of solo albums including 1982's *Words From The Front* and *Flash Light* (1987).

Television reformed in 1992 releasing a self-titled third album. Though they never recorded another LP, they continued to perform, last playing live in 2019. Talking about the band in 1991 to *Details* magazine, Verlaine said: "As peculiar as it sounds, I've always thought that we were a pop band. You know, I always thought *Marquee Moon* was a bunch of cool singles. Then I'd realise, Christ, this song is 10 minutes long, with two guitar solos."

Verlaine died on 28 January after what Jesse Paris Smith, the daughter of Verlaine's former partner Patti Smith, called "a brief illness".

Though commercial success mostly eluded Verlaine, he remains a toweringly influential figure. "Tom Verlaine has passed over to the beyond that his guitar playing always hinted at," wrote Mike Scott of The Waterboys. "He was the best rock and roll guitarist of all time, and like Hendrix could dance from the spheres of the cosmos to garage rock. That takes a special greatness." Flea, of the Red Hot Chili Peppers wrote: "Listened to *Marquee Moon* 1000 times… Tom Verlaine is one of the greatest rock musicians ever… Fly on Tom."

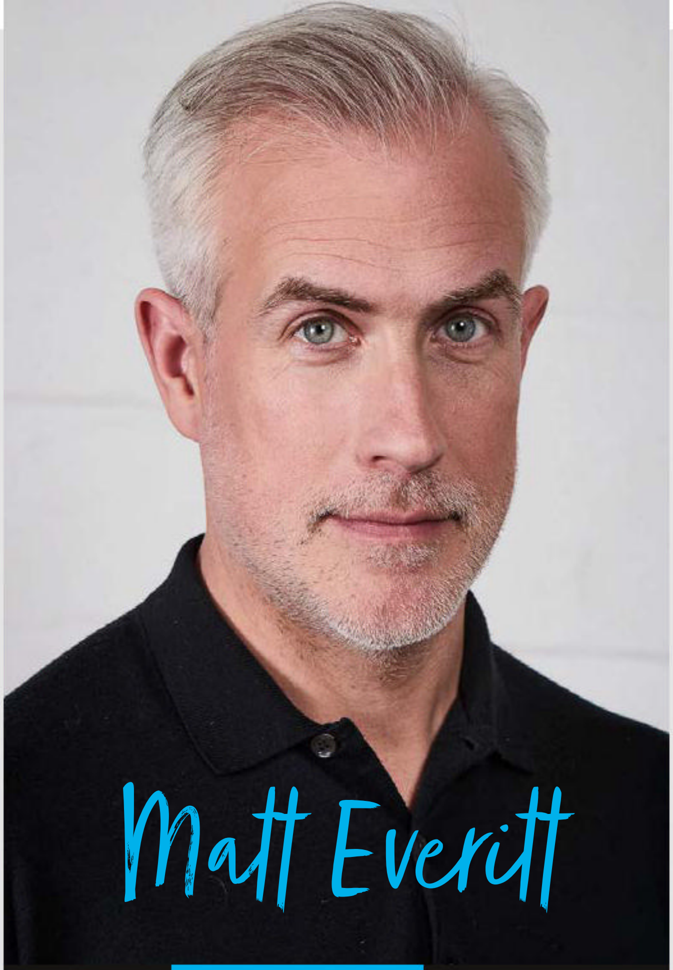
© Andrea Klarin

GRACE JONES SET FOR HEADLINE SLOT AT BLUEDOT FESTIVAL

The mighty Grace Jones is to headline this year's Bluedot festival, set for the weekend of 20-23 July.

A Bluedot representative said that as "one of the most influential musicians of her generation", Jones needed no introduction. "Her influence has made her a towering figure of pop for over six decades. From the classic beats of *Slave To The Rhythm* and *Pull Up To The Bumper* to her gold-selling most recent album *Hurricane*, [she] has become synonymous with a unique fusion of music, art and fashion that has inspired a new generation of artists."

Joining Jones at Cheshire's Jodrell Bank Observatory will be former Moloko frontwoman Róisín Murphy and dance duo Leftfield. Festival-goers can also expect a David Bowie edition of Adam Buxton's *Bug!* show and a screening of acclaimed Bowie documentary *Moonage Daydream*, plus an on-stage interview with writer/director Brett Morgan.



Matt Everitt

MY POP LIFE

THE BBC RADIO 6 MUSIC DJ – AND FORMER MENSWE@R DRUMMER – TALKS US THROUGH HIS MUSIC OBSESSIONS

STEVE O'BRIEN

What's the first song you remember loving?
I loved *The Wombling Song* when I was really small. There's the cult of Mike Batt now, isn't there, about what a genius songwriter he was. *The Jungle Book* was the first record I remember playing, when I was four or five, and all the tracks from that are bangers. But it was *Yesterday* by The Beatles that was the first song to have a big emotional impact on me.

© Getty

Did you have posters of pop stars on your wall as a kid?
The first music poster I had was Bowie, which I got from Athena, a very pastel-coloured *Let's Dance*-era Bowie. I was totally entranced by him even at a young age. And Betty Boo, though I was a bit older then. I had a Queen calendar in about '83 or '84 – I had a big Queen phase and still hold them in a lot of affection. I was fascinated by the massive crowds and stage. I think in the 80s, pop stars were writ large, it was all pomp and ceremony, like here they are playing Rio and there's 200,000 people. I thought that's what pop stars did. I hadn't really got into bands like The Cure yet and thought about how pop stars could be different, it was all about BIG – Michael Jackson, Madonna, Prince, all those people.

What was the first gig that you went to?
There's a couple of nearlys – I *nearly* went to see Twisted Sister at the Birmingham Odeon and wanted to see Queen at Knebworth but my mum wouldn't let me go, and I never fail to remind her of that – I could have seen one of the most historic rock gigs of all time!

© Getty

But the first proper gig was U2 on the Joshua Tree Tour with my friend, John Kelly. They were so big at the time, you couldn't really avoid them. We were 15 and went to see them at the NEC and got there about 6.30am, 'cos we thought that's what you do. It was so early there was no security, so we sneaked in and sat in the NEC eating our sandwiches and drinking our Um Bongo. Eventually, the band turned up to soundcheck and we watched it from the seats. I mean, you look back and think, that was a bit nuts!

What's the very first album that you can remember devouring?
Hunky Dory is a good gateway drug to the rest of Bowie. I got obsessed with *Station To Station* a little bit later, I really loved that record, 'cos then you enter the whole world of the mythology. When I was really young, though… my mum was a huge Beatles fan when she was a teen so we had a copy of *Rubber Soul*

in the house, which I think – if I was pushed – would be my desert island album.

Are there any artists or bands that you're a completist about?
I go through phases of wanting to get everything. I'm looking at my records now, and I've got all the Led Zep stuff, all The Smiths, all of Scott Walker and Blur. I've got all the Creedence Clearwater Revival stuff, too… I had a big Creedence phase. There's a version they did of *I Heard It Through The Grapevine* which I think is better than the original, which I know is a contentious thing to say.

What about singles? Are you a big 7" collector?
I went through a bit of a 7" phase. They've kind of been overlooked in the vinyl revival, haven't they? I know they don't sound as good, but I always think there's something really compact and brilliant about them. People don't love them enough. I really want to get a jukebox, but they're about £8,000. They're not cheap.

Of all the musicians you've interviewed on your 6 Music show, *The First Time With…*, who have you been most excited or apprehensive about?
There's been lots. We started in 2010 and Johnny Marr was the first one that we did. And It's always terrifying doing one of The Beatles. You don't want to arse it up, 'cos these people have been interviewed so many times over the years that interviews don't mean the same to them as they do to other people. Paul Simon is someone, his work is so vast, he's so colossally talented and revered and so many of his songs are legendary. Before we did the interview, I was saying to his team, right, this is going to be about music, we've got the BBC archive, we can play anything… But they were like, "Don't ask about Simon & Garfunkel," and my second question to him was, "When did you first sing in public?" and he was, "It would have been at school, I think Artie was in the audience." I was like, "He's fucking talking about it!" Yeah, he was just brilliant. ■

LOST & FOUND

THE PACIFIC AGE
ORCHESTRAL MANOEUVRES IN THE DARK

It stuck in the craw of core OMD fans that *The Pacific Age* seemed to be entirely for their belatedly-found Stateside audience that had neither witnessed nor connected emotionally with the band's experimental, alternative past.

Pressures from their North American label, prompted by the success of previous album, *Crush*, were forcing a work to rule, which contributed to internal tensions and led ultimately to Paul Humphreys bowing out for 20 years.

Their seventh album is rushed, and, as such, it lacks surprises, offbeat themes and creative nuances, forgoing a tradition begun in their earliest work.

Seldom do eyebrows raise, though *Southern* is a tremendous track sampling Martin Luther King.

The only UK hit, *(Forever) Live And Die*, sung serenely by Humphreys, has soothing harmonies and a lilting chorus. But subsequent singles *We Love You* and *Shame*, plus others, lack warmth, while nothing becomes the album like the song that OMD insisted was excluded, *If You Leave*, the huge US hit from *Pretty In Pink* that triggered the Americans' pushiness.

The LP is decently bookended via the punchy *Stay (The Black Rose And The Universal Wheel)*, a title you can imagine them concocting in 1980, and *Watch Us Fall*, reassuringly unpolished with an understated Andy McCluskey vocal. *The Pacific Age* reached UK No.15 in 1986.

Matthew Rudd

POP UP

© Carlijn Jacobs

BEYONCÉ ANNOUNCES RENAISSANCE TOUR AND BREAKS GRAMMYS RECORD

Beyoncé has announced a huge world tour in support of her No.1-charting *Renaissance* album, including a run of dates in the UK.

The Renaissance Tour will commence on 10 May at Stockholm's Friends Arena before working its way through Europe and the UK over the course of spring and summer. It will then head to North America, before winding up at New Orleans' Caesars Superdome on 27 September.

The Queen Bey will perform on 29 and 30 May and 1, 2 and 3 June at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium, with Cardiff, Edinburgh and Sunderland set for 17 May, 20 May and 23 May respectively.

In other Beyoncé news, the singer recently made history at the Grammys, becoming the most awarded artist in its history. The 41-year-old won for Best R&B Song, Best Dance/Electronic Recording, Best Dance/Electronic Album and Best Traditional R&B Performance. She now has 32 Grammys, overtaking the late composer George Solti, whose tally stands at 31.

"I'm trying not to be too emotional," the singer said after winning the prize for Best Dance/Electronic Album. "I'm trying to just receive this night."

She thanked her husband Jay-Z, their children, God and her uncle Jonny, saying he "is not here but he is here in spirit". In reference to the *Renaissance* album, which honours Black gay culture, she added: "I'd like to thank the queer community – you invented the genre."

Though she scooped four prizes at the ceremony, Beyoncé actually missed some of the early presentations after getting stuck in gridlocked downtown Los Angeles.

"I'm surprised traffic could stop you," joked ceremony host Trevor Noah after the singer finally turned up. "I thought you travelled through space and time."

B.E.F GO BACK TO THEIR ROOTS FOR 'STOWAWAYS' REISSUE

The first material produced by the British Electric Foundation (B.E.F) is set for a surprise reissue.

Formed by Martyn Ware and Ian Craig Marsh after their departure from The Human League, B.E.F's *Music For Stowaways* was initially released as a limited-edition eight-song cassette in March 1981 and later revamped as a full album, *Music For Listening To*, with an alternate tracklisting and artwork.

'Stowaways' was a reference to the original name for the then-new Sony portable cassette player – later renamed the Walkman – which allowed owners to "design a soundtrack for your everyday life for the first time and have it playing while you walked around."

"[That] became the theory behind [*Music For Stowaways*]," explains Ware. "It was about how you could play your music and change your mood wherever you were. Basically, the Walkman liberated music. And there we were at the sharp end with this cassette-only release."

This music was among the first recorded by Ware and Marsh directly after their departure from The Human League. Some tracks on [*Music For Stowaways*] evolved from other recordings they were working on at the time, such as *Groove Thang*, an instrumental version of the debut single by Heaven 17 released on the same day as the cassette and *The Old At Rest*, which derived from a version of *Wichita Lineman* by Jimmy Webb, their very first recording with Glenn Gregory that would subsequently appear on B.E.F.'s *Music Of Quality And Distinction, Volume One*, their 1982 covers album.

Music For Stowaways will be released on CD and 1LP vinyl on 21 April via Cold Spring.

Scan to buy

Haircut One Hundred

Pelican West 40 is a celebration of Haircut 100's much-loved 1982 debut album, released in collaboration with the band.

Available as a 38-track 4LP set that includes the original album cut at half-speed, plus b-sides, remixes, and rarities.

A comprehensive 54-track 4CD edition is also available, along with a 1LP edition of the original Pelican West album mastered at half-speed.

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www.demonmusicgroup.co.uk

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The complete story of The Batcave from the people who were there.

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Both editions include an 80-page hardback book curated by Jon Klein (Specimen / Siouxsie and the Banshees) and Sophie Chéry (Sexbeat). Limited edition prints, signed by Jonny Slut, Jon Klein & Sophie Chéry are currently available exclusively from the Artist Store while stocks last.

Also available as a 20-track 2 LP edition.

Scan to buy

IAN PEEL'S A TO Z OF POP

C IS FOR... THE CONCEPT ALBUM

HOW DOES THE WORLD OF POP MEASURE UP TO ROCK MUSIC WHEN IT COMES TO THE TRICKY ART OF THE CONCEPT ALBUM? IT ISN'T QUITE SO STRAIGHTFORWARD…

You might be surprised to know that top of my vinyl wishlist last year was a new deep-dive boxset from The Alan Parsons Project. Surprised because, despite a few 80s hit singles, this long-running studio project comes very much from the rock world.

The Alan Parsons Project were absolute masters of the concept album, and the arrival of this new 11-LP box – *The Complete Albums Collection* – proves it beyond doubt. It's my boxset of the year by far, and spring hasn't even sprung yet. I haven't had a sudden change in taste and appetite for rock over pop but it has led me to ask: can pop music do 'a concept' as well as rock?

Can you write an entire album – while still making it musically and lyrically memorable and avoiding repetition – about one subject? That's the question a successful concept album answers. The Project didn't do it just once, they did it many times over. Disc One in the boxset is an album devoted to the life and works of Edgar Alan Poe, beating Propaganda's *Dream Within A Dream* [taken from 1985's *A Secret Wish*] to the punch by almost a decade.

Its follow-up, *I Robot*, was an album's-worth of words and music inspired by Isaac Asimov and artificial intelligence. Many other concept albums followed from the Project, based around everything from the Spanish architect Antoni Gaudí to an industrial chemical plant in County Durham (take that, OMD).

We can't really let rock take the crown for best concept albums, can we? Can the pop genre take an idea and run with it for an entire album as opposed to just one single song?

I'd say almost but not quite. Take ABC's treatise on the plastic, synthetic consumer culture of the mid-80s, *How to Be A… Zillionaire!* or OMD's look at the dark side of technology, *Dazzle Ships*. They're both albums wrapped in a concept, rather than having a single narrative run all the way through them.

> ABC'S TREATISE ON CONSUMER CULTURE, *HOW TO BE A… ZILLIONAIRE!* OR OMD'S LOOK AT THE DARK SIDE OF TECHNOLOGY, *DAZZLE SHIPS*, ARE WRAPPED UP IN A CONCEPT, RATHER THAN HAVING A SINGLE NARRATIVE

Likewise, the flower power of XTC's immense *Skylarking* from 1986 or even the end-to-end empowerment of Janet Jackson's *Control* from the same year. If you look at more recent classic pop, it's the same story. Beyoncé's *Lemonade*, for example. It had a concept for sure but didn't really revolve around a single story.

Perhaps the power of pop music is more in the 7" A-side than double-LP storytelling. There's one major caveat, though – I wasn't going to let rock get away with anything that easily. And that caveat is electronic and dance pop. It's this strand of our world that has not only taken Alan Parsons' 70s ideals of the concept album but completely run with them and taken them into a new dimension. Do you like the concept of a late-night American road trip with all the colourful characters you might meet? Sit back and play The KLF's *Chill Out*. Or how about the concept of rescuing a pop group called 5ecret 5tar 5ystem who are lost somewhere in deep space? That's Daft Punk's 2001 classic, *Discovery*.

And there are many more where that came from. The Future Sound Of London's *Lifeforms* and *Dead Cities* albums. Björk's *Biophilia*. And even, from the early days of electronic pop, The Buggles' *The Age Of Plastic* and *Adventures In Modern Recording*… What is *Biophilia*? Who are the *Lifeforms*? That's the beauty of the concept album: you have at least a whole hour to dive in and discover.

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THIS MONTH IN

POP

MARCH 1982

THE ROCKET MAN TAKES OFF, THE JAM DROP A CLASSIC, SPANDAU CUT *DIAMOND* AND BABS IS IN LOVE …

STEVE O'BRIEN

© Getty

10 Elton John kicks off his mammoth Jump Up! Tour in Wellington, New Zealand.

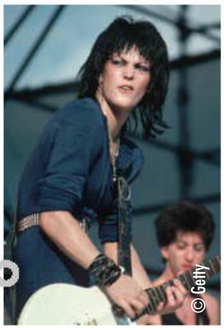
14 Prince plays the final date of his Controversy Tour at Cincinnati's Riverfront Coliseum.

© Getty

17 Samuel George Jr, of 60s soul outfit The Capitols – famous for their song *Cool Jerk* – is stabbed and killed during a domestic dispute.

20 Buckner & Garcia appear on US TV show *American Bandstand* to perform their novelty single *Pac-Man Fever*.

20 The Jam's sixth and final album, *The Gift*, hits No.1 in the UK Albums Chart.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20 *I Love Rock 'N Roll* by Joan Jett And The Blackhearts knocks The J. Geils Band off the No.1 spot in the US.

22 Cameo release their eighth long-player, *Alligator Woman*. Its cover star was Canadian singer and model Vanity, later to work with Prince.

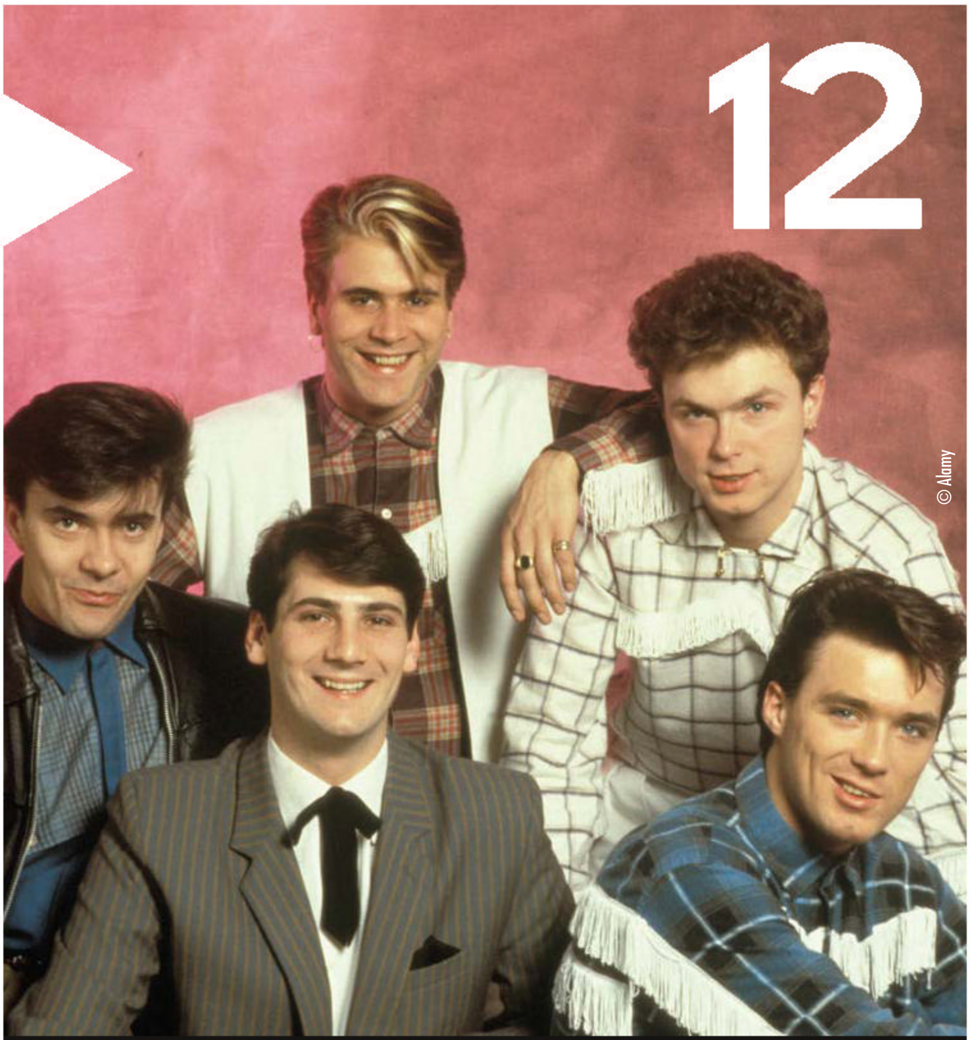
24 Talking Heads release *The Name Of This Band Is Talking Heads*, a double album featuring live versions of songs from their first four studio LPs.

© Getty

29 *Arthur's Theme (The Best That You Can Do)*, sung by Christopher Cross, wins the Academy Award for Best Original Song.

31 The Doobie Brothers announce their breakup after 12 years. They would reform in 1987.

12



© Alamy

Spandau Ballet released their second album, *Diamond*, on 12 March, almost exactly a year on from their debut, *Journeys To Glory*. Like that first record, *Diamond* was produced by Richard James Burgess, only album two saw the band inch toward a more funk and soul sound, exemplified by its lead single, *Chant No.1 (I Don't Need This Pressure On)*.

Making the album wasn't easy, it seems, with Gary Kemp experiencing a severe case of writer's block. "Unlike second marriages, second albums are notoriously difficult," he wrote in his autobiography, *I Know This Much: From Soho To Spandau*. "*Journeys* had been developed over some time and played live before we went into the recording studio, with some songs being discarded at the last minute. It was a mission statement, cohesive and tight, with none of the indulgence that often plagues follow-ups."

Adding to the pressure, Tony Hadley was beginning to lose faith with Burgess. After the band had laid down the backing vocals to album track *Paint Me Down*, Hadley told the producer he thought they sounded out of tune but was rebuffed.

"At that point, I realised he and I were on an utterly different wavelength," the Spandau frontman recalled in his own autobiography, *To Cut A Long Story Short*. "The backing vocals sounded out of tune to me, yet he was happy. Nothing made sense to me anymore."

The album was met with mixed reviews and would peak at No.15 in the UK charts, 10 places down from their debut LP although *Chant*... climbed to No.3 on home soil and *Instinction* made it to the Top 10. When *Diamond* failed to set the pop world alight, Spandau then regrouped and, with another one-year gap, would produce their masterpiece, the platinum-selling *True*.

© Xxxx

TOP 5 UK ALBUMS CHART
28 MARCH 1982

1 **LOVE SONGS**
BARBRA STREISAND

2 **PELICAN WEST**
HAIRCUT 100

3 **THE GIFT**
THE JAM

4 **ALL FOR A SONG**
BARBARA DICKSON

5 **BEGIN THE BEGUINE**
JULIO IGLESIAS

SHINY ENOUGH TO HAVE THEIR OWN COMIC STRIP AND POTENTIAL TV SITCOM, HAIRCUT 100 WERE ALSO AN ODD MIX OF SIX DIVERSE PERSONALITIES, INCORPORATING POST-PUNK, JAZZ, BRAZILIAN RHYTHMS AND MARTIAL ARTS MOVIE SOUNDTRACKS INTO ONE POP MASTERCLASS. EVEN 40 YEARS AFTER THE ORIGINAL LINEUP'S ONLY ALBUM TOGETHER, THERE'S STILL NOTHING QUITE LIKE *PELICAN WEST*. AS THE BAND REUNITE FOR A ONE-OFF SHOW TO CELEBRATE A NEW BOXSET, THEY REVEAL: "THERE WAS AN ENERGY IN HAIRCUT 100 THAT WE ALL MANAGED TO HARNESS. WE WERE LIKE A COMET."

JOHN EARLS

"We always had
the confidence that we were
something special."

© Getty

Good hair day (L-R): Les Nemes, Graham Jones, Nick Heyward, Phil Smith, Blair Cunningham and Marc Fox in Chicago, 1982

"WE TRIED TO LIVE OUT THE DREAMS OF BANDS WE'D SEEN ON TV AND IN MAGAZINES – WE HAD THAT VISION" NICK HEYWARD

The more that anyone looks at Haircut 100, the less sense they seem to make. The band made brilliant pop music with *Love Plus One*, *Favourite Shirts (Boy Meets Girl)* and *Fantastic Day*, delirious singles that hold up against any other smashes of 1982's perfect chart year.

Parent album *Pelican West* was only kept from No.1 by Barbra Streisand's *Love Songs* and Haircut 100 had their own devoted fan army, The Scissors. Alongside Adam Ant, they were the sole pop turn colourful enough to receive their own comic strip in kid's TV magazine, *Look-in*. Like Madness, they even had a sitcom pilot drawn up.

And yet... just look at them. There are six people in Haircut 100 for a start, a band musically rich enough to require a saxophonist and a percussionist alongside the usual guitar/bass/drums formula. The more you listen to *Lemon Firebrigade* and the dizzying *Kingsize (You're My Little Steam Whistle)*, the more layers there are to unpack. Everyone knows "Where does it go from here?/ Is it down to the lake I fear?", yet *Love Plus One*'s chorus is just one of Nick Heyward's mighty lyrics, simultaneously immediate and inexplicable.

They were a cult sensation in North America, predating Ralph Lauren's reinterpretation of the English gentleman look for a Stateside audience. This was a band as likely to wear cricket jumpers or sou'westers, while also musically inventing Blur's mix of nostalgia and modernism a decade early.

Haircut 100 were as unfathomable as they were magnificent. And, five decades on, *Pelican West* still sounds bloody magnificent. "We were a blank canvas for everyone to do their stuff on," theorises Nick. "I'd come up with songs to inspire everyone else to get colouring them in. Everyone played their role." Jazz-loving bassist Les Nemes admits: "It's only recently that I realised we had our own sound. But we never questioned that we were going to succeed. We never said: 'If we make it,' it was always: 'When we make it.' We always had the confidence that we were something special."

Guitarist Graham Jones, an experienced punk who eventually fulfilled his love of Bruce Lee soundtracks by becoming a fourth dan karate black belt, reasons: "I'm not a great fan of all the songs on *Pelican West*. I'd like some of it to be harder-edged. But, in a band, there's always give and take. What you hear is everyone playing to the best of their ability. It's an album with no filler."

According to Marc Fox, the percussionist who was into Krautrock and Brazilian music, last to join Haircut 100 on the recommendation of saxophonist Phil Smith: "*Pelican West* didn't sound like anything at the time, because it's peculiar – both in how it was recorded and the nature of the people who made it."

Growing up in David Bowie's south London hometown of Beckenham, Nick and Les were first to meet. Mutual friend Tim Jenkins told Nemes that Heyward's band needed a bassist. Nick's parents ran posh bar The Ski Club Of Great Britain, part of the central London estate where *Upstairs Downstairs* was filmed, and later immortalised in *Fantastic Day*'s B-side, *Ski Club*. "I chucked my bass gear into my 1967 VW Beetle and drove off to audition for Nick," recalls Les. "The first song Nick played me, *Spanish*, was like nothing I'd ever heard. It had a Talking Heads approach, with one-note solos. I was completely smitten."

Graham, who had already played a punk festival with Sham 69 singer Jimmy Pursey, was next on board. "Mine and Nick's girlfriends were mates who were

Haircut 100's frontman Nick Heyward (left) poses with bassist Les Nemes

© Shutterstock

The boys perform *Love Plus One* on *Top Of The Pops* in January 1982

punks," laughs Jones. "When they'd go out drinking in Beckenham, we got chatting as the girlfriends' boyfriends. At the time, Nick's band was more post-punk and based on XTC, while I was into Generation X, still thrashing out my guitar sounds with heavy distortion."

Then called Moving England, future Sex Gang Children drummer Rob Stroud completed the line-up. "Moving England were really good," insists Graham. "I was always amazed by Nick's ability, and Les' basslines were very unusual, too. Les' playing always wandered up and down the whole neck of the bass. You can hear in *Lemon Firebrigade* and *Love Plus One* how Les gives a great movement to the music."

Rob was quickly replaced by Pat Hunt. Gutted at having narrowly missed out on being part of Tubeway Army, Hunt was determined pop stardom wouldn't elude him second time round. The band moved into a flat together above a florist in west London's Gloucester Road. "One piece of advice I'd give to bands has stayed the same," offers Heyward. "If you want to be a band, you've got to act like a band and have something to say. I once saw Sparks walking down Beckenham High Street. They had the whole ethos of living and breathing being in a band. I thought bands walked down the street together all the time when they weren't on stage. It's important. At 19, we were way too cool to think that we were copying The Monkees by living together.

"We tried to live out the dreams of the bands we'd seen on TV and in the pictures I'd stared at for hours in magazines. We had that vision

EARNING THEIR STRIPES

Nick Heyward's efficacy for design spread to Haircut 100's artwork. The sleeves of their singles featured a distinctive italic typeface – in Balmoral, font fans – with the covers also colour coded for anyone paying attention.

"The stripes on our sleeve design arrived because our manager hung out with the lighting guy who'd done David Bowie's stage lights," laughs Heyward. "The guy didn't know what to do with Bowie's old lights, so our manager Carl did a deal.

"The lights became the stripes at the back of the stage at our gigs. I wanted continuity from the gigs to our sleeves, which stripes gave us. *Love Plus One* had yellow and green stripes, for instance. *Favourite Shirts* just had to be pink stripes, because I wanted it to look like a gift bag – like you were buying the single from a girl in the tuck shop."

Terry, the genial cartoon older gent who was Haircut 100's de facto logo, was another of Nick's creations. "While I was working at the design agency one day, I just happened to draw the face of a smiling guy," says Heyward. "I've no idea why I drew him, Terry was just part of the band's humour. In our early band photos, we were trying for a 1930s look, aspiring to seem as old as the Terry logo. Maybe now, 40 years on, we're the gentlemen we were always aspiring to be."

THE DIFFICULT SECOND ALBUM

When Nick Heyward left Haircut 100 in 1983, his debut solo album *North Of A Miracle* was originally intended to be released under the band's name.

The remaining members wanted to keep the name. A court case ensued, settled in favour of Heyward's former colleagues. They joined Polydor, releasing the album *Paint And Paint* in 1984. Percussionist Marc Fox replaced Nick as frontman.

"It's musically fantastic, but we were trying too hard," admits Les Nemes. "Marc did a good job, but he was very reluctant as singer, not as natural as Nick. We had no choice, and that shows on the album sometimes."

"*Paint And Paint* isn't the greatest thing Haircut 100 ever did," deadpans Graham Jones. "A couple of tracks are OK, but we knew when we were recording that it wasn't going to last."

Marc remembers becoming the singer as "Having the confidence to say: 'Oh, I'll have a go,'" but admits he never felt natural in the role. He feels the album title is appropriate, summarising the music as "an artist's impression of Haircut 100." He confesses: "It was an attempt to make something that people would associate with Haircut 100, which sounds pathetic now. The performances are fantastic, but it sounds like we're waiting for Nick to show up, and he doesn't.

"Emulating what Nick did was so hard. You end up either making it too clever-clever, or becoming aware of how brilliantly simple Nick's lyrics were on songs like *Love's Got Me In Triangles*. I'm so impassioned about how good Nick was on *Pelican West*."

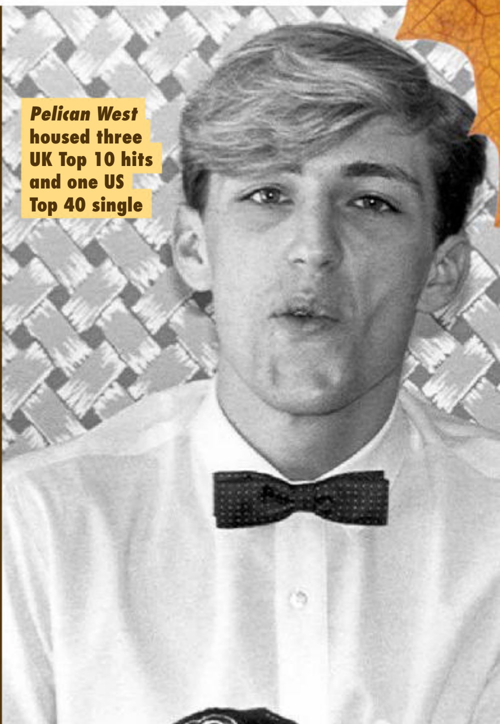
both from the start of Haircut 100, and once we got successful. I still play a Mustang bass because it's what Tina Weymouth looked so cool playing in Talking Heads."

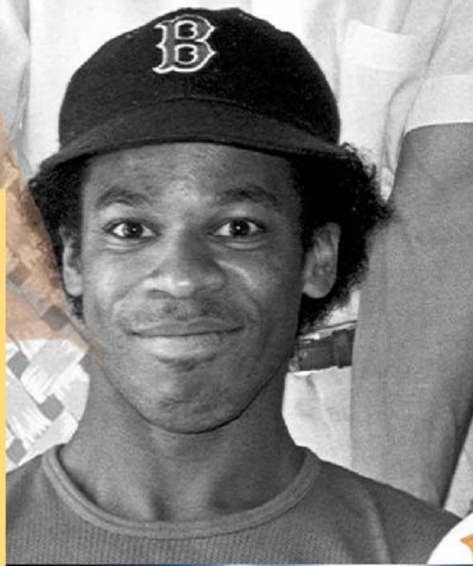
That band mentality meant a change of name from Moving England arrived easily. At a band meeting, someone suggested "Haircut", someone else offered "Hundred", then Nick thought of fusing the two names. Marc explains: "There was no Svengali figure telling bands what to do in 1981. When we first did *Top Of The Pops*, we saw Depeche Mode in their rubber trousers, Tony Hadley with a rug on his shoulders and Boy George in the corner, looking completely unique. We were different from everyone else, but so were all the other bands.

"There was no choice of options, so you ended up making what worked for you from your group of individuals. Even our name: 'Haircut' and '100'? We laughed our way into the chart. Provided you didn't fall into fits of laughter saying 'Haircut 100' to other people, after three times of saying it, it became reality."

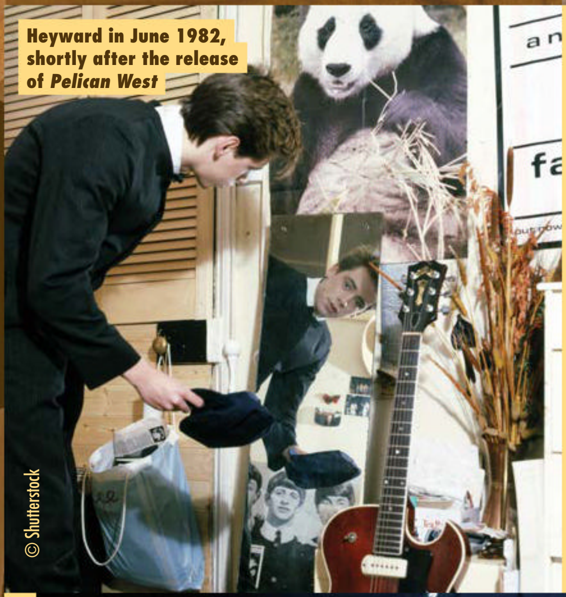
Rather than appear everywhere on gig listings, the re-christened Haircut 100 were selective in their shows. "We wanted to create an event each time we played," remembers Graham. "We'd give out wine and marshmallows to the audience, because who hands out marshmallows at a gig? We didn't feel we needed to play everywhere under the sun just for the hell of it."

By then, their line-up had been bolstered by recommendations from Joe Dworniak and Duncan Bridgeman, part of Britfunk band iLevel and bosses of Haircut 100's rehearsal studios in





***Pelican West* housed three UK Top 10 hits and one US Top 40 single**



Heyward in June 1982, shortly after the release of *Pelican West*

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"We were unstoppable live... The stage was where we felt most comfortable" – Nick Heyward

© Shutterstock

Leyton, east London. They suggested saxophonist Phil Smith, as Graham recalls: "We needed a saxophonist for one song at a show at The Embassy Club on Bond Street. Phil stood on the balcony. When he started playing, everyone turned around, going: 'What's *that*?' We always tried to introduce elements to make the gigs more interesting, and there was obviously a lot more Phil could bring."

"Everything in Haircut happened so quickly," continues Marc. "I wasn't aware of any huge interest in the Haircuts, it was just my mate Phil saying: 'I think you'll like this lot.' From first turning up with a bag of percussion to being in the studio making *Pelican West* was a matter of months."

It helped that their singer knew how Haircut 100 should look as well as sound, bolstered by his day-job in a design agency. "I thought like I was the art director of the band," reflects Nick. "I always carried a portfolio with me, which had pictures of us and our potential artwork. I knew not to leave the visual ideas up to other people because, if you don't take control of your life, you can't complain when others do it instead."

"JONATHAN ROSS ONCE TOLD ME: 'I WENT OUT DRESSED LIKE YOU ONCE AND NEARLY GOT BEATEN UP'" **NICK HEYWARD**

"The looks for the band always came from Nick," says Les. "We lived near Kensington Market and got a lot of our gear from there, mixing and matching from ideas Nick suggested. Nick would have a diamond jumper straight out of *Chariots Of Fire* and I'd think 'OK, fine with me.'"

Heyward insists the imagery wasn't always thought out, stating: "It's funny, the things that stuck around. I put on a sou'wester once just because I didn't think anyone had worn one in pop before. I went to a fishing shop off Piccadilly Circus, where I got the big hat and socks. Then I thought: 'I could go the whole way here, go full fisherman and get waders, too.' Jonathan Ross once told me: 'I went out dressed like you once and nearly got beaten up.'"

Spandau Ballet were a key influence, as Nick remembers *Chant No.1* "blowing London apart". They even had a meeting with Spandau's charismatic manager, Steve Dagger, hoping he'd represent Haircut 100, too. "Steve has a constant smile about him and, when we met him, he had a snake around his arm," laughs Nick. "I thought: 'OK, that's unique'. The meeting didn't work out, but that's how strong Spandau's influence was. They were gods to us. When Marc joined, he was a tall, hairy-chested man who could have been in Spandau. The rest of us were all under 6ft and couldn't even grow facial hair."

Haircut 100 quickly signed to Arista Records, who hooked them up with The Beat's producer, Bob Sargeant. "The Beat and The Specials were so far advanced of us, we thought there was no way we could sound that good," raves Heyward. "Then we got together with Bob, and it was, 'Wow, he's making us sound like *Mirror In The Bathroom*!' Everyone in the band had their own influences. Bob was the one able to bring it all together."

Favourite Shirts became the first single. At that point, it became clear Pat Hunt had to leave. Graham reasons: "Pat couldn't keep pace. It didn't matter if mistakes were made live but, in the studio, you're on a schedule and it wasn't happening."

Respected soul drummer Blair Cunningham joined from Shake Shake, the other band of rehearsal studio managers Joe and Duncan. "They were very understanding," attests Les. "They said: 'Look, it happens.' If you've got Blair behind you, you can't go wrong. With a drummer like Blair driving the music along, it's going to sound fantastic. I've never heard him say a bad word about anyone. He just wants to get on with the job."

Another fallout from *Favourite Shirts* came when Marc was forced to quit his day job as a teacher at Lewisham Girls School in south London. He laughs: "As soon as I was on *Top Of The Pops*, I was called in to see the headmistress and told: 'We have reason to believe you've contravened Inner London Education Authority rules by contracting yourself to the BBC. We think you should choose between us and a pop career.'" At only 21 years old, Marc was distant from his older teaching colleagues, additionally feeling at sea acting as more of a carer than an educator for many of his disadvantaged pupils.

With all six of the band able to fully concentrate on recording, their debut album took shape under Bob Sargeant's tutelage. "I don't think there's been much since that's been derivative of Haircut 100," ponders Nick. "There have been no bands copying Haircut 100 at all, really. Lyrically, I drew from pioneers like David Bowie and Marc Bolan, going past my brother's bedroom, hearing *Ride A White Swan* and thinking: 'Why are you riding a white swan?' I liked art-pop, singing words that didn't make sense. What I wrote was different and mixed up. This wasn't The Carpenters."

In part, *Pelican West* sounded so unique as it was one of the very first albums to be recorded wholly digitally. "Bob had tried digitally recording with The Beat," says Marc. "We were blown away by the clarity, by how you could isolate and individuate every sound. We were a bright and shiny looking band, and our sound reflected that."

Recording techniques have largely reverted to the more natural analogue way of making music, as Marc explains: "We were making music at an unusual point in time. Our songs still jump out on the radio but, while it still sounds modern, it does so in a way we look on 40 years later as being a little naïve. Also, after *Pelican West*, automated dance music suddenly happened. There was no such thing in 1982, so we were at the mercy of trying to make ourselves into machines."

Pelican West's glossiness made instant heartthrobs of the band, much to their bemusement. Nemes notes wryly: "Generally, the fandom was great fun. It was only when girls would press the buzzer from 7am at the apartment in Gloucester Road when we were home that it was a bit much. We had to call the fire brigade a couple of times when fans got stuck in the railings outside."

Favourite Shirts: Haircut 100 pose backstage at the Hammersmith Odeon on 10 June 1982

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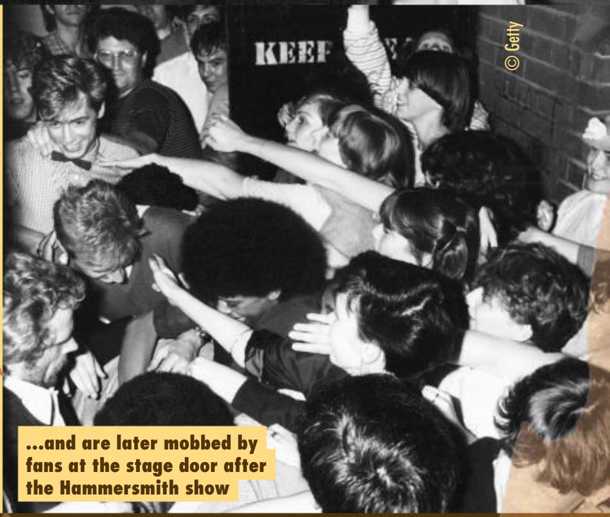

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...and are later mobbed by fans at the stage door after the Hammersmith show

"GREED, SPEED AND VANITY MEANT WE WE DROVE INTO A BRICK WALL" **MARC FOX**

The band never got to see the pilot sitcom script penned by *Not The Nine O'Clock News* writer Chris Langham, with a new tour quickly interrupting any putative filming schedule. Graham remembers: "Having our own comic strip in *Look-in* and talk of a sitcom was hilarious. Daft as it was, having your own comic strip is a huge privilege, because how many bands get that?"

Heyward agrees, pointing out: "I'd seen footage of The Beatles hysteria and thought: 'That looks really good!' But that stuff had to go, because it got in the way of the music. It's only now, when you see the pictures of screaming fans, that you see how sweet it all was and think 'Bless your hearts.' The screaming would have stopped, as it did to Depeche Mode and Blur."

Hysteria was never an issue in the States, where Haircut 100 generally attracted a more considered response, though Nick remembers: "On our first walk as a band away from our fancy hotel on Gramercy Park, we nearly got beaten up. We got so much stick, because 1982 New York was not ready for the way Haircut 100 looked. They wanted The Doobie Brothers."

At least, as Graham describes, the US tour shows were a blast: "The Americans actually listened to what we were playing. They appreciated our musicianship, which made us play differently. We started to mature as musicians there."

"The looks for the band always came from Nick" – Les Nemes

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A homecoming tour climaxed with two shows at Hammersmith Odeon, released as part of the new boxset of *Pelican West*. "We were unstoppable live," beams Nick. Les adds: "We were living out our dream. The stage was where we felt most comfortable, because it's where we got to hang out as mates, doing what we loved most."

One-off Beatles-y single *Nobody's Fool* continued Haircut 100's reign, going Top 10 six months after *Pelican West*. Sadly, it was the original lineup's last hurrah. Although *Pelican West* had only been released in February 1982, Arista demanded a second album be ready to release by Christmas the same year. Somehow, enough songs were assembled for recording at Oxfordshire residential studio The Manor, where Nick's heroes XTC had recorded *English Settlement* just weeks before. But the workload caught up with Heyward, who stopped attending the follow-up sessions at London's industrial studio, The Roundhouse. Unbeknownst to his bandmates, Nick convalesced at a nursing home.

"Mental health is communicated so differently now," the singer says. "Bands wouldn't think twice about cancelling a tour. There had to be pioneers for that. Bands like us paved the way in showing how not to split up."

Graham adds: "At the time, I don't think there was anything we could do. We were in the middle of a successful pop band, with people pulling us in different directions. There were pressures involved, and we didn't know who to turn to. Now, there are more avenues for people with mental health issues. Thankfully, it's better recognised." Nemes admits: "We weren't very good at sticking up for ourselves. We should have told Arista to fuck off, that we were taking some time off. It was a confusing time. Our manager was great for having big, wacky ideas, but we would have benefitted from someone who was looking after us. Communication wasn't very good, and we just didn't know what was happening with Nick." As Marc summarises: "The management, record company and publisher were all older than us. They'd had experience of the tensions Nick was experiencing. Nick was clearly struggling, but the attitude was just: 'Write the songs! Write the songs!' We should have all been grown up enough, inside and outside of the band, to take the foot off the accelerator. Instead, greed, speed and vanity meant we drove into a brick wall."

The demos for that second album, *Junction Box*, are on the new boxset. Opinions in the band differ on its merits: Les and Graham love them, Nick and Marc not so much. "They're just works in progress," shrugs Nick. "I wasn't happy with the sound and wanted it to be bigger. I'd been introduced to The Beatles' engineer, Geoff Emerick, but I couldn't convince anyone Geoff was the guy to produce us. I like the songs, but they're just old demos, not a cause for regret."

Marc points out that the three most finished songs, including the hit *Whistle Down The Wind*, eventually featured on Nick's debut solo album, *North Of A Miracle*, noting: "The other songs have been sat on the shelf for a reason. I was excited at how they were sounding, but they weren't finished."

But Graham eulogises the punchy *I Believe In Sundays* in particular, while Nemes believes: "*Junction Box* would have been a much better album than *Pelican West*. We'd toured so extensively that we were really on our game, while Nick's songwriting had gone to a whole new level."

Just maybe, there could be a full-band second Haircut 100 album after all. With the 40th anniversary of *Pelican West* the obvious catalyst for a reunion, Nick has been writing songs that have proved suitable for – so far – Graham and Les to play on. "They're more towards the early Talking Heads punk side of Haircut," muses Nemes. "They're rawer and simpler than *Pelican West*, but with incredibly strong melodies."

Whatever happens, there's the Shepherd's Bush Empire show in May to celebrate 40 years of our favourite comic strip heroes. All the band seem massively excited for the gig, hinting it might not be a one-off after all if it goes well.

The only issue for their comeback concert is how to play music with such rapid-fire intensity now they're in their sixties. Graham: "You could stick us on stage at a village hall tonight and we'd reel off *Pelican West* without too much effort. That's the beauty of the bond we all have." Marc: "Those songs are so fast. Listening to *Kingsize*, I think: 'Oh fuck...' But I'm hopeful for the future. Once we're all onstage bouncing off each other, we'll inevitably want to do this again and again." Les: "Regardless how long it is since I've played, as soon as a Haircut 100 gig happens, it's always 'Off we go!' and we're playing full speed ahead."

The final word goes to Nick Heyward, Haircut 100's gentle, effusive singer, an underrated poet still in love with what bands can achieve: "Haircut 100 has its own energy. You can say: 'We're 61, of course we're not going to play that fast now.' But on the night, it might well be: 'Woooah!' We were a dynamo first time round. It's no wonder I got knackered.

"Maybe we'll need to calm down. But once *Favourite Shirts* starts up, before you know it, the band is flying and I'll be thinking: 'Oh God, it's happening again!'"

● The *Pelican West* boxset is released on 24 February via Demon as a 4CD or 4LP set. The band play at Shepherd's Bush Empire on 12 May.

WOODLAND ECHOES AND TREE SURGERY

In the years since Haircut 100 ended, Les Nemes, Blair Cunningham and Phil Smith have become session musicians, while Nick Heyward released his gorgeous ninth solo album *Woodland Echoes* in 2017.

Marc Fox initially became a session percussionist, too, but moved into A&R, scoring his first No.1 signing with *Ain't No Doubt* by Jimmy Nail in 1992. He has since worked with The Beloved, Natalie Imbruglia, The Spice Girls and Girls Aloud. "Musicians can be quite myopic," says Fox of why more musicians don't help other artists with their music. "They love the buzz of being on stage and the social life of being around other musicians. There's also a stigma that record labels are all fat cats, and it's not like that. It's a different group of people who are equally impassioned about music."

Graham Jones played with pre-Britpop adventurous jazz-punks Boy Wonder, but a love of surfing took him to Truro to offer guitar lessons. One of his students was a tree surgeon, who offered Jones some part-time work – and Graham eventually ran his own tree surgery business, running teams clearing powerlines. "Hard work, but very enjoyable," says Jones. "Every now and again, one of my wife's friends will discover I used to be a pop star: 'Graham will know about that, from when he was in Haircut 100.' 'Really? *Graham* was in Haircut 100? Really?!' That gets me a funny look."

© Steve Ullathorne

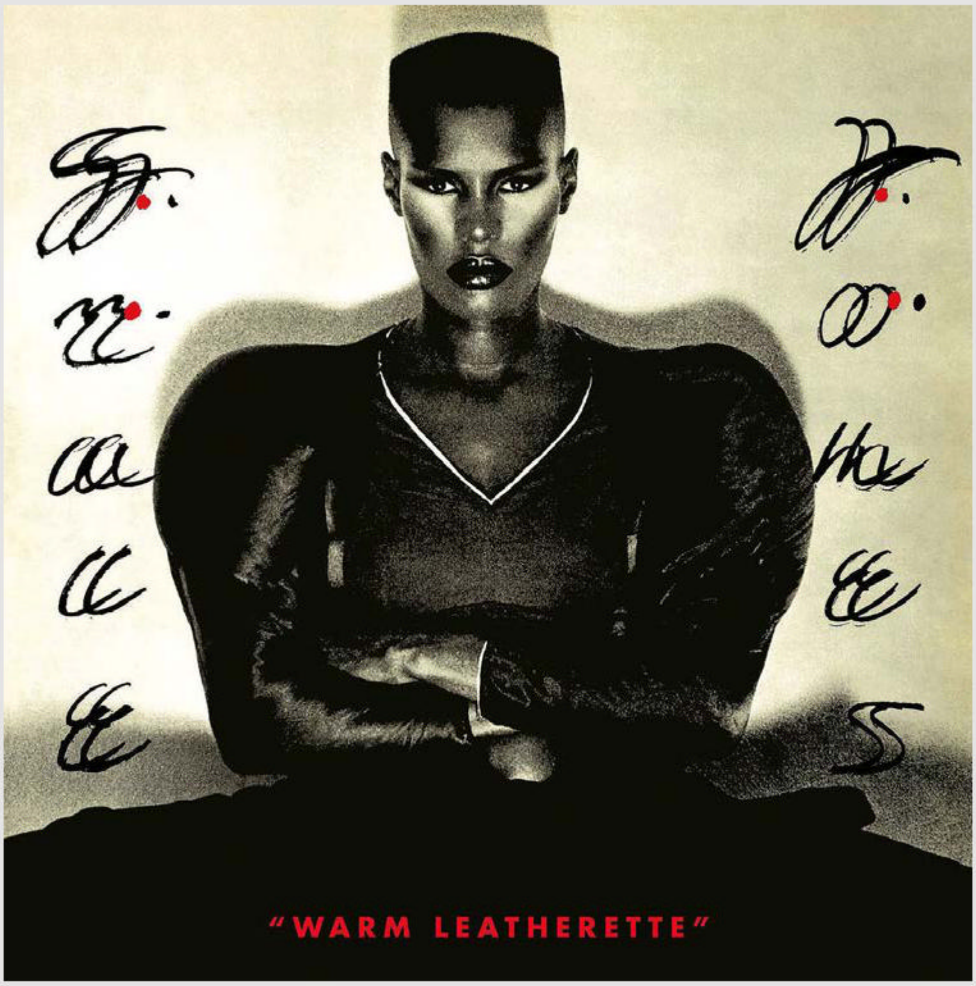
CLASSIC ALBUM

WARM LEATHERETTE

GRACE JONES

FOR HER FOURTH STUDIO ALBUM, THE INIMITABLE DIVA TOOK AN ABRUPT STYLISTIC ABOUT-TURN WITH THE COMPASS POINT ALL STARS THAT SAW HER MOVE AWAY FROM DISCO AND EMBRACE HER JAMAICAN HERITAGE TO STUNNING EFFECT

FELIX ROWE



Grace Jones on stage in her Issey Miyake-designed bronze-coloured breastplate

© Getty

The turn of the 80s marked a distinct shift in gear for Grace Jones, from New York disco diva to laidback rude-girl. No-one could have predicted this phenomenal about-turn, except perhaps her label boss, Island Records' Chris Blackwell.

If you can get the measure of someone simply by perusing their record collection, then by the same token you can gauge much about an artist from the songs they cover. In the case of a young Grace Jones it was typical diva staples, from Edith Piaf's *La Vie En Rose* to glitzy Broadway showtunes that were selected to showcase her larger-than-life stage persona. Bold, though dare we say, somewhat hackneyed choices to represent the fledgling star, even when given a state-of-the-art disco makeover.

So, what can we gauge from the lead track chosen to relaunch her into the next decade? A cult, underground B-side by then-obscure English proto-industrial electro act, The Normal (AKA Mute Records supremo Daniel Miller). *Warm Leatherette* was inspired by dystopian satirist JG Ballard's *Crash* novel, whose central theme is "car-crash sexual fetishism", and according to a contemporary review from *The New York Times*: "Hands-down, the most repulsive book I've yet to come across."

Blackwell, would certainly have been forgiven for choking on his morning coffee. On the contrary, he didn't just approve this incendiary venture. He was riding shotgun.

Warm Leatherette is, without doubt, the most important record in Jones' long and colourful career. This was her pivot album – the artistic repositioning that hailed her transition from fading disco also-ran to forward-thinking, thoroughly modern, Jamaican superstar. Released at the turn of the 80s, it set her up to flourish in the decade, both in the charts and, ultimately, on the big screen. This was achieved by forging a new sound and angular image to match – clearly centred on her Caribbean heritage, while absorbing a range of influences into its deliciously appealing melting pot.

UNTAPPED POTENTIAL

By the end of the 70s, Jones had achieved moderate success with an impressively prolific three studio albums in as many years, helmed by pioneering disco producer Tom Moulton. Yet with disco swiftly falling out of fashion, the scene that launched her was now becoming an artistic albatross. Commercially, too, Jones' career was stalling at best; at worst, it was on a downward trajectory.

WARM LEATHERETTE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT RECORD IN JONES' LONG AND COLOURFUL CAREER – FORGING A NEW SOUND AND ANGULAR IMAGE TO MATCH

Blackwell resisted the urge to cut his losses. Rather than sweeping the unprofitable artist off the Island Records roster, he did the opposite, making her a key figure in his label's new strategy. Blackwell obviously knew Jones had untapped potential, and his pet project – a group that would later become known as the Compass Point All Stars – provided the perfect vehicle in which to unleash it.

Having just built a new studio complex at Compass Point, Nassau, in the Bahamas, Blackwell envisaged a cutting-edge house band to back his roster. He assembled the finest session musicians, from Kingston (Jamaica) to Bolton (Lancashire). Picture an updated, pan-global version of Phil Spector's Wrecking Crew, blending the rubbery Jamaican rhythm section of reggae pioneers, Sly and Robbie, with driving rock guitars, sprinkled with space-age synthesizers from Wally Badarou, later of Level 42.

Compass Point was a fertile hotbed of musical talent that encouraged a cross-pollination of styles – not so much culture clash as a futuristic fusion. Compass Point became the go-to studio, not just for

THE PLAYERS

AKA **THE COMPASS POINT ALL STARS**

SLY AND ROBBIE

The dream-team Jamaican rhythm section made up of Robbie Shakespeare on bass and Lowell 'Sly' Dunbar on drums. Their names grace the credits of countless reggae records and they are among the greats of Jamaican music. Robbie Shakespeare sadly died at the end of 2021 due to complications following kidney surgery.

WALLY BADAROU

The French-West African keyboard player, later of Level 42. Around this time, Badarou connected with Talking Heads and Tom Tom Club, who were regular residents of Compass Point, after first recording there with Brian Eno. Often overshadowed in the press by the iconic rhythm section, Badarou nonetheless was integral to the sound of the album, providing otherworldly synths and textures that pushed the sonic envelope and took the music into bold, futuristic territory.

BARRY REYNOLDS

The English guitarist was known mostly for his musical partnership with Marianne Faithfull, another Island Records artist. Reynolds was integral to Faithfull's critically-acclaimed 1979 return, *Broken English*, the previous year, and Blackwell hoped for him to do the same with Jones. He appeared on numerous Compass Point All Stars records.

MIKEY CHUNG

The Chinese-Jamaican multi-instrumentalist, who often worked with Sly and Robbie, and played guitar on *Warm Leatherette*. Chung died recently at the end of 2021. He performed with a wide range of artists including Lee Perry, James Brown and The Rolling Stones.

UZIAH 'STICKY' THOMPSON

Another graduate of the Jamaican reggae scene, Thompson was a pioneering percussionist who performed on records for Jimmy Cliff, Peter Tosh, Ziggy Marley, Sinead O'Connor and Tom Tom Club.

THE SONGS

1 WARM LEATHERETTE
Jones' cover of The Normal was a bold, knowingly controversial choice, aligning her with the cool British electro underground and a certain seediness. Grace's treatment of the track sets the tone for the ensuing record perfectly, laid-back and loaded with swagger. There's oodles of space in the arrangement, with punchy guitar stabs on the accents injecting a punky vibe into the funk groove. The All Stars replicate the sense of minimalism of Daniel Miller's original electro arrangement, although they bring added warmth and lucidity.

2 PRIVATE LIFE
Released in the same year as The Pretenders version, Chrissie Hynde maintains that Jones' cover is one of the highlights of her career. The Pretenders' original already had a gentle reggae shuffle implicit in its groove, which is totally brought to the fore and fully realised on this version. In Jones' hands, it's pure and blissful dub reggae. Cue some exquisite guitar work, spacey, ambient synth electronics, and percussive accents that come and go, caked in trademark dub tape delay. *Private Life* showcases Sly & Robbie in their element, almost horizontal in their deceptively relaxed groove, while cheeky rhythmic rimshots retain that subtle sense of forward motion. *Private Life* was the track that finally broke Grace Jones in the UK, entering the Top 40 for the first time (No.17).

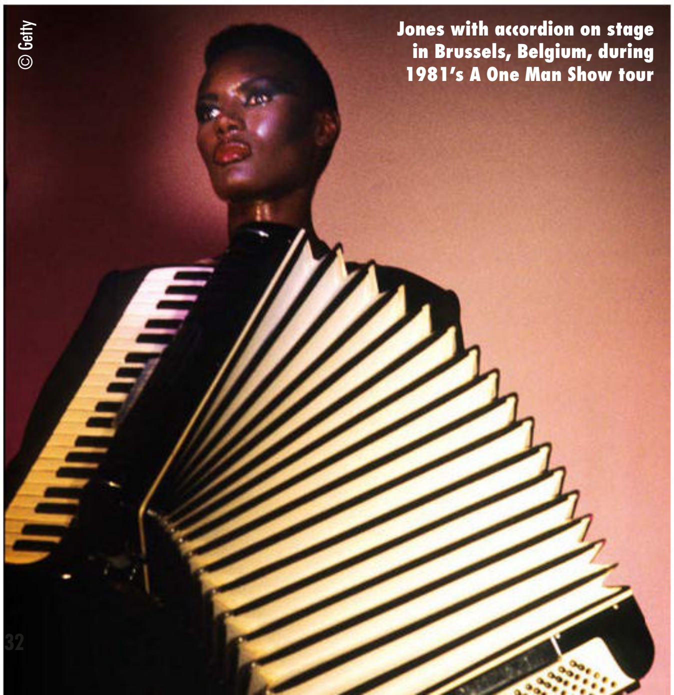
3 A ROLLING STONE
Chosen as the lead single from the record in the UK, although it failed to make an impact initially. One of just two originals on the LP, and the only song to feature a co-write from Jones, it nonetheless draws on obvious imagery from *Papa Was A Rolling Stone*. The track rolls along on an electro-funk groove, with squelchy synths providing a futurist counterpoint to the otherwise largely conventional arrangement. Incidentally, the hand-drawn artwork for the single is clearly the prototype for Jean-Paul Goude's later iconic cover of *Nightclubbing*: Grace's face in profile with cigarette hanging nonchalantly from mouth.

4 LOVE IS THE DRUG
One of Jones' signature songs, the Roxy Music cover that later got the thumbs up from Bryan Ferry, who praised its attitude. This cut is one of only a couple of more straight-up rock numbers on the record, with its propulsive 4/4 beat, drive-time guitars, and subtle rhythmic synthesizer pulses. Listen carefully, though, and you'll still hear those characteristic rimshot shuffles in the breaks. It's also one of few tracks here where Grace sings melodically. Stretching out across seven minutes, the outro gets progressively woozier and more spacey as the insistent drums fade into the mix, leaving the atmospheric sounds to come to the fore. Note: the later 1986 single was a reworked version created for the *Island Life* compilation, in which the synths are brought up in the mix. It clearly draws on an electro New Wave sound, with huge, processed drums.

5 THE HUNTER GETS CAPTURED BY THE GAME
A reimagining of the Smokey Robinson hit and chosen as the lead single in the US. Smokey's classic has been covered many times by various artists, including Blondie's 1982 New Wave version of the same era from the album *The Hunter*. It's another rare example in which Grace sings it straight, though her vibrato sounds a little lacking in dynamics, particularly in the verse. Jones' take is a more conventional funk-soul arrangement and, as such, one of the least innovative songs on the record. Despite boasting some funky guitar throughout including a shimmering, slinky part in the outro, it's nevertheless a little pedestrian; a serviceable funk workout, compared to the more forward-thinking tracks on offer. Pleasant enough, but lacking the punch exhibited elsewhere.

6 BULLSHIT
The opening riff is extremely reminiscent of *Beat It*, except it actually predates Michael Jackson's hit by a year. Musically, it's one of the album's least inventive arrangements. However, it's the lyrics and attitude that subvert the song, transforming it from otherwise standard fare to a cool, contemporary and kicking track – a standout of the album. The catchy melody and most uplifting, life-affirmingly positive groove are shattered by the contrast of Jones singing, "I'm sick and tired of all this bullshit!" The extended synthy outro vaguely recalls the 8-bit computer console music of the era. The second purely original track on the album, composed by guitarist Barry Reynolds, the brazen, kick-ass attitude fits Grace perfectly.

7 BREAKDOWN
The Tom Petty hit, not wildly removed from the original, but chilled out, with light percussive and instrumental flourishes. It's another example of the spacious, less-is-more arrangements from the Compass Point All Stars – confident enough not to overplay, using the flashes of brilliance sparingly to great effect. There's an interesting ambiguity on Grace's cover versions in that they are not totally detached from the originals; rather there was a collaborative element with the original artists. Tom Petty, for instance,



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Jones with accordion on stage in Brussels, Belgium, during 1981's A One Man Show tour

THE COMPASS POINT SOUND HARKED BACK TO HER CARIBBEAN ROOTS, WHILE PUSHING INTO EXCITING, UNEXPLORED TERRAIN

Island's roster – AC-DC's *Back In Black* was recorded there in the same year – and the All Stars became the go-to backing band. This environment didn't so much jumpstart Jones' career, as give her the keys to a new Ferrari.

Warm Leatherette was the first in Jones' trio of Compass Point studio albums, co-produced by Blackwell and American engineer, Alex Sadkin. It was during this early-80s period that Grace developed the image that has since come to define her. While her earlier disco period reflected her formative years as a model and frequenter of the New York club scene, the Compass Point

wrote a brand new third verse in *Breakdown*, especially for Grace. This artistic interaction was echoed again on the next album, when Jones' take on *Demolition Man* (penned by Sting), was released before The Police's own version later that year. In this curious case, the 'cover' becomes the original...

8 PARS

The closing track, originally written and released by Jacques Higelin on the record, *No Man's Land*, continues Jones' popular tradition of singing French-language songs. According to Jones singing in the language of love is not only a nod to her earlier success, and time on the fashion catwalks of Paris, but also to her "many French lovers", which included Jean-Paul Goude. Opening with a catchy synth riff and frenetic rhythmic percussion pattern, the intro bears all the hallmarks of a potential synth-pop classic, before a fast-plucked mandolin swiftly switches the mood and transports it to the European continent. The resulting track is a delightfully soothing fusion between traditional French folk and Caribbean dub reggae, complete with inspired shuffling from Sly Dunbar. Interestingly, this underrated Jones classic might never have been. Apparently, writer Higelin was so unsatisfied with his own parent album on which it appeared that he almost burned the master tapes before it was released.

9 SHE'S LOST CONTROL (B-SIDE)

Though not on the original pressing of the album itself, this dub reggae take on the Joy Division track was drawn from the same recording sessions, and released as a B-side. It features prominently in various forms on the 2016 boxset release of the LP, which contains an extensive range of extended versions, dub versions and 12" singles.

Celebrated star photographer Anthony Barboza captures Jones in this 1981 studio portrait

© Getty

sound harked back deeper to her Caribbean roots, while pushing boldly into exciting, unexplored terrain. It enabled Jones to nurture and bring out this hitherto dormant side of her character that felt an infinitely more authentic, natural fit.

But, of course, none of that really matters if the music isn't up to scratch. While cover songs continued to be her bread and butter, it's clear that Jones had by now discovered the indie section in the record shop. Her 80s output notably trades cabaret for cool, drawing on new wave and post-punk as much as Broadway. Alongside the aforementioned *Warm Leatherette*, her crate digging extends to Roxy Music's slinky *Love Is The Drug*, Tom Petty's *Breakdown*, and *Private Life* by The Pretenders. Perhaps most telling of all is Joy Division's *She's Lost Control*, which surfaced as a B-side shortly after Ian Curtis' death, though presumably recorded in the album sessions prior.

A SHIFT IN GEAR

Cynics might view this stark artistic shift as a desperate grasp for credibility; a wily move from her producers, aimed principally at wooing the industry taste-makers. In fact, Jones took her own active interest in Manchester's Haçienda scene, tapping up cult Factory Records act A Certain Ratio for a mouthwatering potential collaboration during a UK promotional tour. While essentially a covers album, *Warm Leatherette* never feels like one. It sounds like an artist and band entirely comfortable in their own skins and in total command of their unique vision.

Nevertheless, it was certainly an inspired move from Blackwell to recruit the Jamaican reggae rhythm section and then apply them to rock songs. The Afro-Caribbean and pop-rock hybrid created a distinct and contemporary New Wave sound, as Sly and Robbie locked into each other intuitively, working together like two hands of the same body. Their rhythmic flourishes are integral to the Compass Point sound, as evidenced on *Warm Leatherette*, adding a looseness, fluidity and warm sensuality to counter Jones' cool, detached vocal delivery.

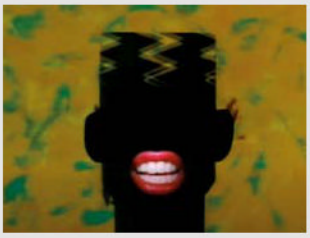
Indeed, another key innovation of *Warm Leatherette* is Jones' now-trademark vocal style that swaps the strut for swagger. The record features none of the powerhouse vocal theatrics demonstrated on her earlier output. Where previously her rich vibrato would soar above the arrangement in a frantic race to the finish line, here she steps back, drops pitch and largely speaks

THE VIDEOS

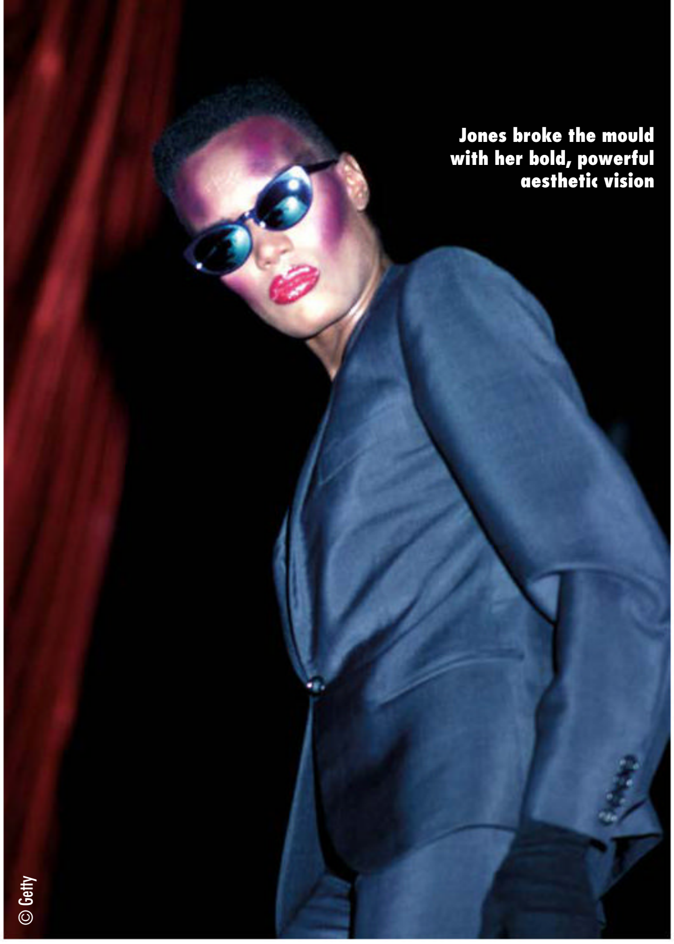
PRIVATE LIFE

With the album released pre-MTV, there was apparently only one official music video produced to promote the record. Performances of several key tracks from this era, including *Warm Leatherette*, were captured in Jones' 1981 live video, *A One Man Show*. The simple, low production values of the *Private Life* promo (directed by Mike Mansfield) prove to be an incredibly effective blessing. After all, when you have one camera positioned on Grace's face, who the hell needs special effects? Jones is showcased in profile, closely cropped, wearing a red hood. Her stony poker face reveals no emotion. Then she lifts her hands to her face... and pulls it off, revealing that it was just a mask all along. That said, her real face beneath the veneer is equally, if not more, stony. It's one glorious take all the way through, occasionally zooming in, but retaining that close focus on Jones' characteristically detached expression. Her background as a model comes to the fore here, and as you'd only expect from Grace, it's utterly compelling.

LOVE IS THE DRUG



There was no promo commissioned for the original version released in 1980. The popular version of the video – directed by Matt Forrest and Bruno Tilley – was actually produced for the 1986 remix of the song in promotion of Jones' *Island Life* career retrospective compilation. This feast for the senses is clearly designed to capitalise on the birth of MTV, and it meets the brief perfectly. The video, so very of its time and all the better for it, includes a range of alternative animation styles, both hand-drawn 'cartoons' and stop-motion animation, rendering Grace's angular image in various figurative forms. The variety in the collage approach suggests it was assembled via contributions by different animators in varying styles. As a radio-geared pop single, this contemporary version is far more immediate and catchier than the original album session recording, and the video captures that sense of urgency and cross-pollination.



Jones broke the mould with her bold, powerful aesthetic vision

© Getty

WHERE HER RICH VIBRATO WOULD SOAR ABOVE THE ARRANGEMENT, HERE SHE STEPS BACK, DROPS PITCH AND LARGELY SPEAKS THE WORDS IN A NONCHALANT PATOIS

the words in a nonchalant patois. Its power lies not in what it *does*, but in what it *doesn't* do. Jones' delivery oozes self-assuredness, but does so with a shrug that seems to say: "Take it or leave it, I couldn't give a shit."

The same could be said of her reinvigorated visual image, simplified and reduced down to its constituent parts, all hard angles and geometric shapes. Jones' boyfriend and French artist, Jean-Paul Goude, was inspired by his muse to create her most iconic artwork, by design provocative and confrontational. There's still a certain kitschness present, even down to the album's title and its association with faux, cheapness and kinkiness – flashy, trashy, but compelling nonetheless.

Commercial success wasn't quite as immediate as the critical plaudits, yet its ripples spread far and wide as the Compass Point formula took hold, influencing everyone from Joe Cocker and Robert Palmer to Talking Heads. While *Warm Leatherette* is a bold statement of intent – and a stellar album in its own right – arguably, the most fully-realised expression of this new direction would follow on Grace's next record, *Nightclubbing*. That album picks up the baton, further pushing the envelope in being even more confrontational and sonically challenging. *Warm Leatherette*, if comparably more conventional, set Grace on that path. Indeed *Pull Up To the Bumper* (a key track from *Nightclubbing*) was actually conceived and recorded during the *Warm Leatherette* sessions, and draws upon the same subverted car-driving lyrical motif.

BIG-SCREEN VIEW

As we all know, the movies soon came calling, and Jones added Bond girl to her growing list of accolades when she appeared in 1985's *A View To A Kill*. As customary with most Bond characters of the era, it's arguably a slightly problematic, two-dimensional rendering of a stereotyped cliché: the 'exotic femme fatale' who seduces the hero. But no-one can deny Jones' memorable performance is the most thrilling component of that film, nor that it is an extension of the angular, larger-than-life character she herself had first created on *Warm Leatherette*.

Sadly, the recording studio itself closed its doors in 2010, and several key members of the Compass Point All Stars have since passed away in the last decade, some only within the last few years – a definitive full stop to wrap up an immense and essential body of work. However, much of the gang reconvened to collaborate for one last hurrah on Grace Jones' swansong album, *Hurricane*, released in 2008.

Like the source material that inspired the original song, *Warm Leatherette* could have ended up a car crash. But the gamble ultimately came good. Innovation isn't always a totally new invention forged in a vacuum – rather it's about taking something existent and creating new and fresh material with it. Grace Jones 2.0 is the perfect example. Redefined, repositioned, revolutionary.

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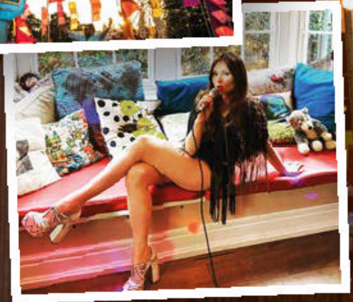


TERMS AND CONDITIONS Family Ticket is for 2x adults and up to 4x children (aged 17 and under). Entrants must be 18 and over. Prizes are non-transferable and non-refundable. Prize does not include camping equipment, travel or parking, food or drink. Tickets will be received via e-ticket around a week before the event. ID will be required for wristband collection. Full Camp Bestival T&Cs can be found here: **dorset.campbestival.net/tickets/terms-conditions**

"CBGBs WAS A WONDERFUL INCUBATOR FOR BABY BANDS"

© Getty

ONE OF THE GREAT LOVE STORIES IN MUSIC, AS WELL AS ONE OF ITS FINEST RHYTHM SECTIONS, TINA WEYMOUTH AND CHRIS FRANTZ ARE PREPARING TO SHARE THEIR MEMORIES OF LIFE IN TALKING HEADS AND TOM TOM CLUB. IT'S BEEN AN INCREDIBLE ADVENTURE, AS THEY REVEAL ALL ABOUT THEIR DAYS OF SWEATING WITH RAMONES, FORSAKING POLITICAL POP AND WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO REMIND PEOPLE OF THE JOY OF WORKING WITH DAVID BYRNE.

JOHN EARLS

This year marks the 50th anniversary of one of music's great romances. Chris Frantz met Tina Weymouth in 1973 at Rhode Island School Of Design. You'll know already their plans to become artists got railroaded by Talking Heads and Tom Tom Club. What's also obvious is that they're both still madly in love.

Frantz's 2020 memoir, *Remain In Love*, is a beautiful and touching extended paean to Weymouth. Over Zoom from their loft studio – a mishmash of instruments piled against the back wall, a single platinum disc on the shelves, the couple's cat wandering in and out of shot – their devotion is evident. Chris introduces himself, before going to fetch his wife. "Darling, we've got a British interview," he tells Tina tenderly. Slightly flustered at being less than two minutes late, Tina is full of apologies.

If Talking Heads were the coolest band in New York, Chris and Tina are still the coolest and most welcoming couple in music.

The pair are talking because there's a speaking tour of Britain to promote. Frantz was unable to plug *Remain In Love* in person because it was released during lockdown. "This tour makes up for not being able to go anywhere for my book," he explains.

They also want to share what life was really like in Talking Heads. The 32 years since officially splitting in 1991 have seen snarky comments between David Byrne on one side and Tina, Chris and keyboardist Jerry Harrison on the other. A three-song reunion performance when they were inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame in 2002 is one aspect all four can agree on: that was horrible.

As Chris says: "I'd like our tour to convey that Talking Heads was an amazing time. It was very much a shared experience. It was all pretty happy until..."

Tina interjects: "...Until our last show."

The couple laugh, until Frantz

"I WOULD LIKE OUR TOUR TO CONVEY THAT TALKING HEADS WAS AN AMAZING TIME"

CHRIS FRANTZ

Talking Heads in 1977, the year of their debut album (L-R): David Byrne, Tina Weymouth, Chris Frantz and Jerry Harrison
Inset: Chris and Tina pictured at their home studio today

True Stories: Chris and Tina's upcoming show is billed as "a unique series of in-depth, up close and personal live on-stage interviews"

grimaces at the memory of that final reunion. "Yeah. Talking Heads was great until our last show."

They first began playing together in 1975, when Chris and David's band, The Artistics, became Talking Heads. The drummer suggested his girlfriend try out as bassist, despite never having played the instrument. "I didn't necessarily want to be in a band," laughs Weymouth. "Then I was, and I loved it. I'd been a musician before Talking Heads, touring at 13 with Mrs Tuft's Handbell Ringers. I'd learned how to play flute and folk guitar from books – that would have been so much quicker now, from YouTube tutorials."

Her blonde fringe makes Tina instantly familiar from the bassist who was so imperious in Talking Heads, but she reveals it was "daunting" to be one of the few female musicians in the New York scene that also spawned Blondie, Ramones, Patti Smith and Television.

"I thought the world of Debbie Harry for being able to front a band," says Weymouth. "Debbie had an innate wisdom. I just don't know how she did it. I also might have emulated Patti Smith, but she was very different from Debbie. I adored watching Patti onstage, but while Debbie was very much a team player, Patti was very diva-like. She was this grand poetess. That's an art, too, but it was so different from what I wanted to emulate."

A trio before Jerry joined following 1977's debut single *Love Goes To Building On Fire*, Talking Heads got their break when they played three shows at scene club CBGBs' festival in August 1975. "Before we even performed at CBGBs, I knew it was going to be New York's equivalent to The Cavern in Liverpool," remembers Frantz. "You could really get it on musically there. At the same time,

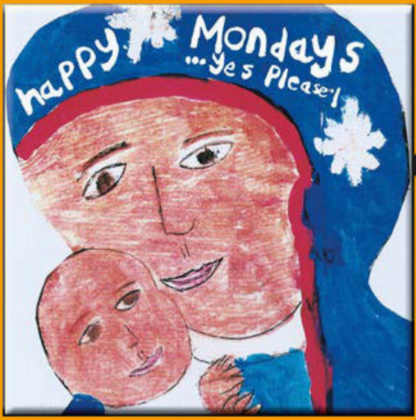
Yes Please! No Thanks!

Chris Frantz and Tina Weymouth helmed one of the most infamously chaotic albums in music history – and it should be noted that the troubled life of Happy Mondays' *Yes Please!* is not the fault of its producers.

Recording began at Eddy Grant's studio, Blue Wave, in Barbados in February 1992. "Had Tina and I been different types of people, we would have quit after the first day," reflects Chris.

Mondays' singer Shaun Ryder had with him a bottle of prescription methadone, to help him beat heroin addiction. It was large enough to last Shaun the scheduled month of recording. "The band arrived in the studio late at night on the first day," Chris explains. "Shaun was really strung out and not happy – he'd dropped his methadone bottle back at Manchester Airport. The methadone was all over the floor, and Happy Mondays' manager informed me and Tina that Shaun had got on his and knees to lick it off the floor of the airport."

On the first full day, as Chris set up Gaz Whelan's drums, Bez appeared. "The studio was surrounded by sugarcane fields," says Chris. "Bez was doing donuts on them in his convertible Jeep. It flipped and landed on his arm, practically severing it. While we waited for the emergency medical staff to arrive, Bez lay on the studio couch, Tina holding his arm so it wouldn't flop around. When Bez eventually returned, it looked like he had the Brooklyn Bridge attached to hold his arm together." Tina notes: "And that was just the first day of *Yes Please!* It really was that chaotic."



Same as they ever were: Talking Heads in 1980, the year of their magnus opus, *Remain In Light*

CBGBs was so small that, if you had a bad night, so few people could see you mess up that it wasn't going to ruin your reputation. It was a wonderful incubator for baby bands."

Influential arts mag *The Village Voice* put the unsigned Talking Heads on their cover after that 1975 festival. "Those shows were only our fourth to sixth performances ever," smiles Chris. "We stood out from the crowd. First of all, a woman playing bass was a rarity. David was an unusual presence. And, at a time when rock stars either dressed like drag queens or cowboys, we wore polo shirts and Levi's. *And* we had short hair."

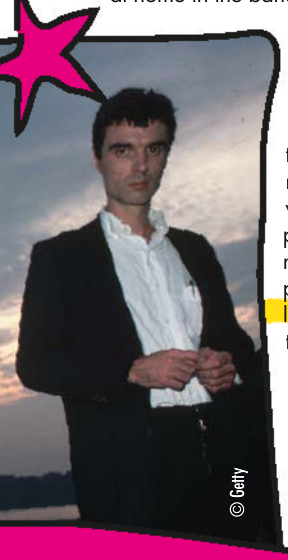
Talking Heads' anti-image came at a price, as Tina explains: "Being on the *Village Voice* cover was a backhanded slap in some ways, as their headline was: 'The conservative impulse of the new rock underground', with the feature saying that we dressed like young Republicans. We all went: 'Oh, *God*.' When that happened, we decided we wouldn't address politics at all."

With their lyrics being predominantly esoteric, Talking Heads didn't need to get political. Sire promptly snapped them up, though Weymouth remembers having to tell legendary Sire boss Seymour Stein to slow down his plans. Talking Heads weren't ready to release an album and tour so soon after that *Village Voice* cover.

"I'll forever be thankful to David that we had a wonderful relationship through the chemistry of us writing together," enthuses Weymouth. "I always had to be cautious with David, because he was like a cat: you couldn't rub his fur the wrong way. I sometimes had to suppress my personality with him, but we had the same wonderful approach to music, and I wanted to delve into my role in the band."

Despite her caution, Tina was no pushover, as she recalls: "I couldn't be overly wilful with David, but I stood my ground. If he tried to make me play something I didn't want to, I'd just go: 'No!' The songs could sometimes be dry, and I'd think: 'We need something lush here.' I'd be like the Pied Piper, saying to David: 'Why not come over here? It's really cool over here!'"

It took six months of constant practice, rehearsing every night, for Tina to feel at home in the band. "By then, I was playing bass in my sleep," she says. "I was literally dreaming my playing. It was like there was a gestalt in my head. I'd still do weird things in my playing, trying to fit more notes than were possible into a song. I thought in strange tempos and was such a punk in how I tried to fit myself into a regular song structure.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Geniuses Of Love (L-R): Chris and Tina Weymouth with fellow Talking Head Jerry Harrison in 1990
© Getty

"I THOUGHT THE WORLD OF DEBBIE HARRY FOR BEING ABLE TO FRONT A BAND"
TINA WEYMOUTH

"Those limitations would often lead to something interesting: *Found A Job* was basically from me saying: 'What, really? We have to move onto the next part of the song already?'"

Frantz similarly rhapsodises the band's early days, saying his happiest tour was Talking Heads' first ever extended run of shows, supporting Ramones in the UK. "To this day, the hottest gig of my entire life was Eric's in Liverpool," he laughs. "We later played shows in the desert, but Jerry – who never perspired – was dripping and turning red after playing Eric's. We were just the openers. The poor Ramones had to go on after, while steam was coming off our bodies upstairs. We had such a great time on that tour."

Tina and Chris married in June 1977, three months before Talking Heads' debut album *77* was released, featuring *Psycho Killer*. "Through any challenges, what I always had going for me was Chris," smiles Weymouth. "He wrote great drum parts and had a great drum tone. I could listen to Chris' tone and work out what to play from there. Not all the CBGBs bands had great drummers."

The first fissures in Talking Heads led to Chris and Tina's other great achievement: Tom Tom Club. After four albums in four years, David Byrne started work on *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts* in 1980 with Talking Heads producer Brian Eno. "We never had any intention of doing anything outside of Talking Heads," insists Frantz. "Our hand was forced when David announced he was making his solo album, because Jerry then said: 'Well, if David is doing a solo album, *I'm* going to do a solo album.' Tina and I knew how long it takes to make a record." Weymouth adds: "So did our accountant. He told us: 'You'd better do something, too, else you'll have nothing to pay the rent.'"

The couple's friend Robert Palmer had persuaded his pal, Island Records boss Chris Blackwell, to see an early Talking Heads show at CBGBs: "The same night Andy Warhol saw us," according to Chris. A fan ever since, the label legend was intrigued to hear Talking Heads' rhythm section was at a loose end. He told Chris and Tina: "Come to Compass Point. Record a single. If I like that, you can do a whole album.'"

Tom Tom Club was born from a simple idea, which Frantz describes as: "We wanted to make a record that was good for dancing: something that would appeal to our friends in New York, who liked to hang out at Mud Club and Danceteria." They recorded three rhythm beds, of drums, bass and additional percussion. The very first song to emerge was *Wordy Rappinghood*. Chris Blackwell was in the studio next

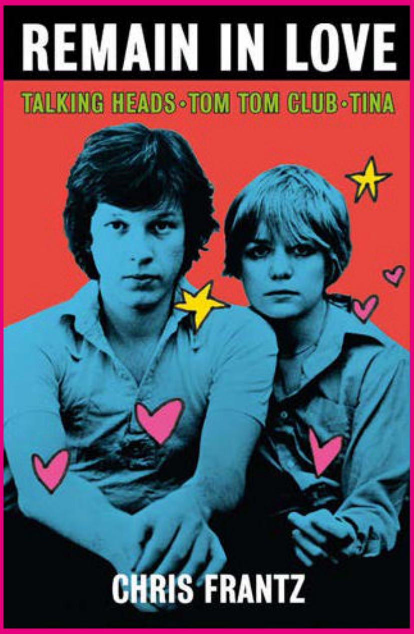
Recovering Together

In March 2022, Chris and Tina were involved in a serious car crash. Their Ford SUV was hit by a drunk driver, who was on the wrong side of the road.

Frantz escaped with minor injuries, but Weymouth suffered a fractured sternum and three broken ribs. "I'm healing very well from the accident," says Tina. However, the bassist suffers from A1AT, a lifelong genetic condition which reduces the ability to produce protein in the blood supply to her lungs. "My A1AT was an issue after the crash but I've finally been able to get weekly infusions again."

While recovering, Weymouth has been considering writing her own memoir as a companion to her husband's autobiography, *Remain In Love*. She reasons: "I have my own point of view, and while Chris was living his life, I was living mine. Writing a book has been in my head for years and Chris' book made me think it might be time to get it done."

Tina has read *Remain In Love* several times, stating: "I enjoy Chris' take on everything, as he's got a unique way of observing things. I love his positivity, especially at a time when the autocrats wanting to take charge at home have created a mean cycle of uncivil debate. I like a good debate, but when it devolves into name calling, it loses me."



Frantz behind the kit at 2013's ATP Festival in Camber Sands

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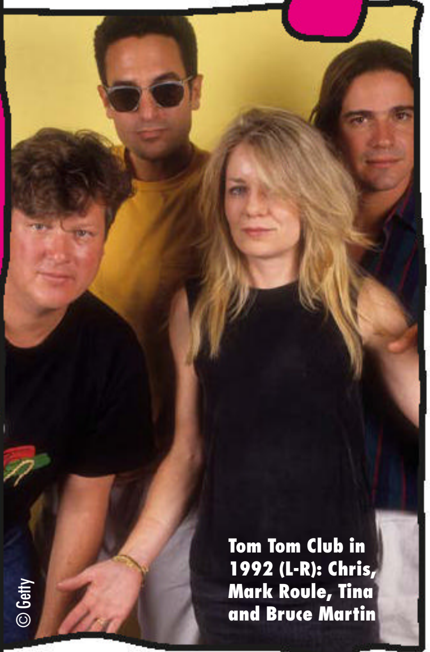


Tom Tom Club in 1992 (L-R): Chris, Mark Roule, Tina and Bruce Martin

© Getty

door at Compass Point, producing Grace Jones' *Nightclubbing* album. Chris remembers: "We said to Chris: 'Can you come and hear this, tell us if you like it or not?' Chris listened to a very rough mix of *Wordy Rappinghood* and said: 'Play that again!' He had a huge grin and said: 'I'm going to release this as soon as possible.'"

Within weeks, *Wordy Rappinghood* was at No.7 in the UK. According to Tina: "Tom Tom Club's success was its own karmic reward. The band was a very inclusive idea, which paid off. Once Chris and I had those rhythm parts, we thought: 'Right, now let's bring in our friends.' When we made *Wordy Rappinghood*, I thought: 'Gosh, now we need to get some words together,' which is how the line 'What are words worth?' came.

"The first people I wanted on board were my sisters, Laura and Lani. We started singing an old schoolyard chant Lani remembered as a five-year-old. That was just a lark, to test everyone on how they'd react, but Chris and everyone *loved* it. That positivity carried on throughout Tom Tom Club."

They wanted Talking Heads live guitarist Adrian Belew as singer. He instead joined King Crimson, but found time to play guitar on Tom Tom Club's revolutionary self-titled debut album. Follow-up single *Genius Of Love* is one of the most sampled songs in hip-hop history, notably on Grandmaster Flash's *It's Nasty*, Mark Morrison's *Return Of The Mack* and *Fantasy* by Mariah Carey. "I loved rap from the start, Chris even more so," remembers Tina. "When I heard people playing *Genius Of Love* on boomboxes, there was nothing more exciting. We loved being a tiny little part of the rap community."

Tom Tom Club's last album, *Downtown Rockers*, was back in 2012. There's a minor domestic over the collective's future, as Frantz reveals: "We've been waiting to have maintenance done on our studio for a year. But we are going to do some more recording, and that maybe will come out as Tom Tom Club." Tina: "No." Chris: "OK, Tina says no." Weymouth: "Tom Tom Club was fantastic, but the wonderful band we had, everybody has their life cut out for them now. We'll make something, but we don't know what it's going to be."

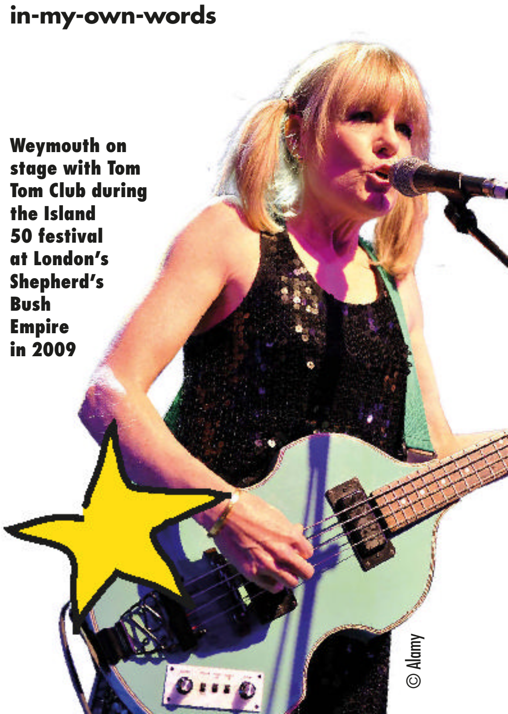
At least Chris and Tina's musical future is more promising than Talking Heads. The couple regret how that band ended, blaming EMI – who took over Sire around 1985's *Little Creatures* – for their messy farewell. "Contractual obligations made it complicated," explains Weymouth. "The Police split amicably, and Talking Heads should have been like that. David said: 'Honour the contracts and we're done.' Then he walked out and told everyone: 'I'll be back in a year.' We got sued by EMI and it caused so many problems. We all fought them, because we wanted to protect Talking Heads' legacy, but it was another five years to get through that."

Frantz says: "We get a lot of comments of: 'Isn't it terrible you can't get along?' But when we were together, we always got along fine. One person didn't want to work with the rest of us anymore. That's his choice, and one we can't really do anything about."

Tina offers the best summary of Talking Heads' relationships, via Steve Lillywhite, producer of their final album, *Naked*. "In the words of Steve Lillywhite? 'It's just silly.' He's a wise man, Steve."

Talking Heads may be in a 'silly' place, but they were magical for more than a decade. Tom Tom Club were an influential beacon of positivity. And now 50 years later, Chris Frantz and Tina Weymouth are still laughing, remaining in love. There's nothing silly about that. ■

● Chris Frantz and Tina Weymouth's "A conversation with" tour visits Oxford Sheldonian Theatre (25 May); London Electric Ballroom (27 May) and Leeds Brudenell Social Club (28 May). Tickets are available at ticketsource.co.uk/in-my-own-words



Weymouth on stage with Tom Tom Club during the Island 50 festival at London's Shepherd's Bush Empire in 2009

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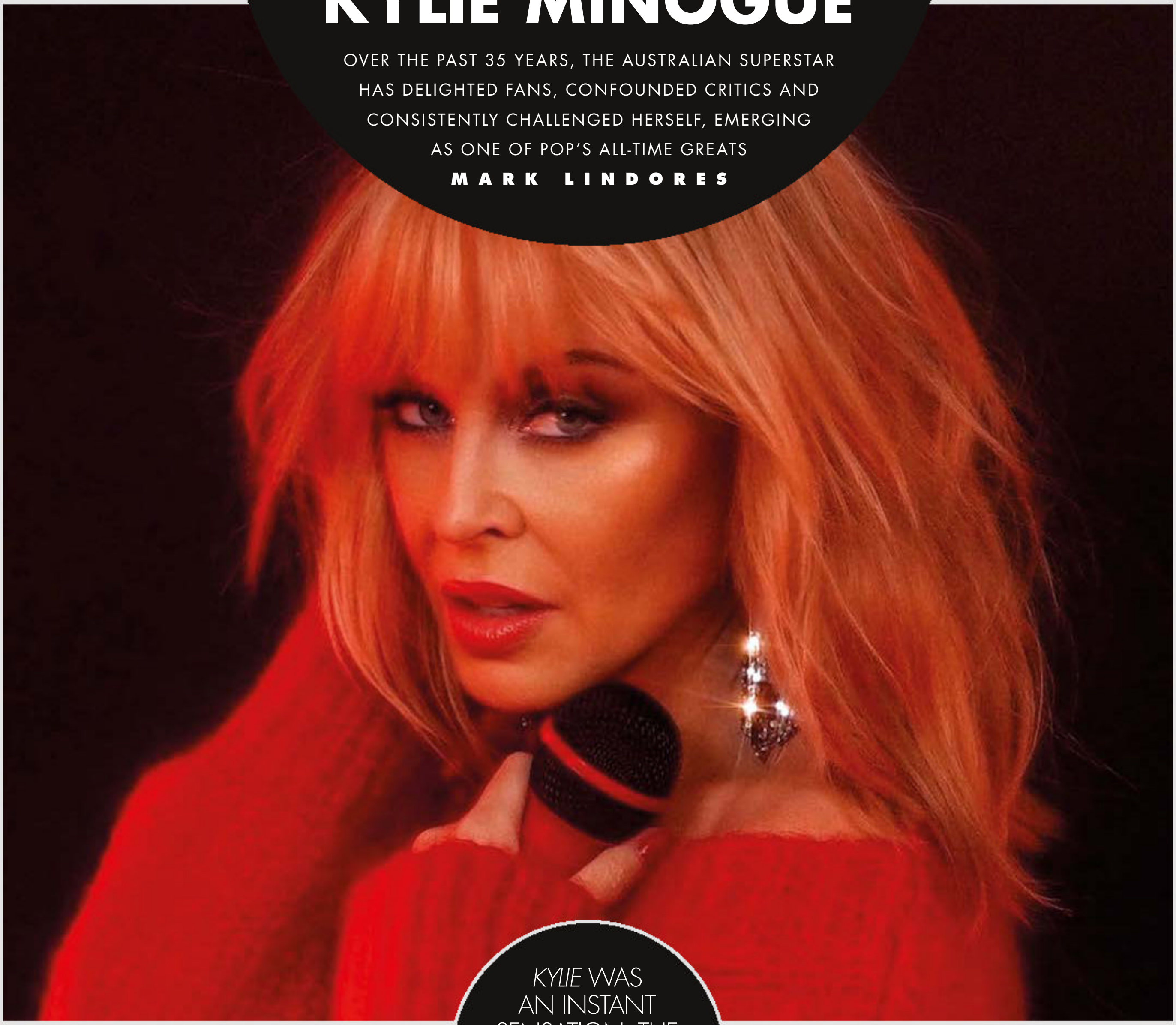
KYLIE MINOGUE

OVER THE PAST 35 YEARS, THE AUSTRALIAN SUPERSTAR HAS DELIGHTED FANS, CONFOUNDED CRITICS AND CONSISTENTLY CHALLENGED HERSELF, EMERGING AS ONE OF POP'S ALL-TIME GREATS

MARK LINDORES



Back in 1987, soap stars weren't exactly renowned purveyors of quality music. Anita Dobson, Nick Berry and, erm, Benny from *Crossroads* had all scored UK hits but were forever consigned to the novelty single category. So it's no surprise that expectations were low for the debut single from Kylie Minogue, an Australian actress in a daytime soap opera.

Back home, the *Neighbours* star was the toast of Oz TV and on the verge of crossover success after her cover of Little Eva's *The Locomotion* unexpectedly became the biggest-selling single of the year off the back of a charity benefit gig. But with no follow-up prepared, her Australian label Mushroom Records promptly dispatched Kylie to London to record a single with producers du jour Stock Aitken Waterman (SAW) during a break from filming.

Kylie's relationship with SAW got off to a famously rocky start when the pop powerhouses deemed her such a low priority that the trio forgot they were working with her, keeping Minogue waiting for a week before cobbling together a song in an hour as she was preparing to board her flight home.

When that song, *I Should Be So Lucky* – released on Pete Waterman's own PWL label due to disinterest from all other record companies – spent five weeks at No.1 in the UK, Mike Stock was forced to make a grovelling emergency dash Down Under with three potential follow-ups for Kylie to record during her breaks from *Neighbours* – *Got To Be Certain*, *Turn It Into Love* and *It's No Secret*. Minogue recorded the remainder of her debut album during subsequent trips back to SAW's Hit Factory studios when her filming schedule allowed.

> *KYLIE* WAS AN INSTANT SENSATION, THE BIGGEST-SELLING ALBUM OF 1988 – FANS COULDN'T GET ENOUGH

Released in July 1988, *Kylie* was an instant sensation, going on to shift five million copies and becoming the biggest-selling album of 1988. *Got To Be Certain* and the re-recorded and retitled *The Loco-Motion* both hit No.2 in the UK. Fans couldn't get enough of their heroine's pop confections – however formulaic they may have sounded.

Je Ne Sais Pas Pourquoi is beautifully melancholic while *Love At First Sight* captures the giddiness of a new relationship. *I'll Still Be Loving You* is a mature ballad and *It's No Secret* offers a change of pace to portray first-time heartbreak. The standout is undoubtedly *Turn It Into Love*, the most faithful to SAW's earlier hi-NRG successes. Proud of what they called their production-line pop, SAW compared their business model to Motown. If that was the case, in Kylie they'd found their Diana Ross.

KYLIE
Released 1988
Label PWL/Mushroom/Geffen
Chart Positions
UK No.1 AUS No.2

Although plans were in place to release more singles from Kylie's debut LP, the public's voracious appetite for new material was blatantly obvious with the mammoth success of *Especially For You*, her duet with Jason Donovan for Christmas 1988. Stock, Aitken and Waterman instead began writing a follow-up album, treading the thin line of subtly progressing Minogue's sound while taking care not to alienate her young fanbase.

Although her sales figures and popularity spoke for themselves, the question of whether she would have longevity loomed large. With that in mind, Kylie signed on to star in *The Delinquents*, a teen love story set in the 1950s, to maintain ties with the acting world should her music career come to an end. *Enjoy Yourself* ultimately merged her next two endeavours, delivering an album of two halves – on one hand a succession of the pop hits her fans couldn't get enough of, and on the other a handful of 50s-inspired songs to tie in with the film.

Though a little dated, even by 1989's standards, *Enjoy Yourself* perhaps made sense at the time but in hindsight is a strange beast. It indicates that no-one, maybe not even Kylie herself, had confidence in her abilities or potential. The wistful, stargazing *My Secret Heart* and jazzy piano-led ballad *Tell Tale Signs* seem to be readying her for musical theatre rather than what actually followed.

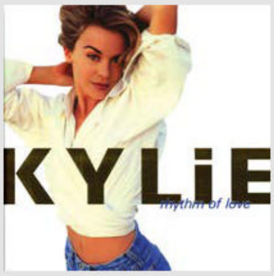
Of course, having added to the singer's tally of hit singles, *Hand On Your Heart*, the Funky Drummer-sampling *Wouldn't Change A Thing* and beautifully yearning *Never Too Late*, the album did its job.

THOUGH A LITTLE DATED, *ENJOY YOURSELF* PERHAPS MADE SENSE AT THE TIME BUT IN HINDSIGHT IS A STRANGE BEAST

Entering the UK charts at No.1, it spent four months in the Top 10 and was the fifth biggest-selling album of 1989 with pre-sales of over 600,000. It also made the Top 10 in Ireland, Germany, Switzerland, Norway, Australia and New Zealand. The box office success of *The Delinquents*, helped *Tears On My Pillow* to No.1 in January 1990 – Kylie's only UK chart-topper of that decade.

Of the album tracks, *Nothing To Lose* is a funky relative of *Got To Be Certain* while the joyous *I'm Over Dreaming (Over You)* and uplifting, house-inspired title track are lost Kylie classics, the latter fortunately being the blueprint for her future direction.

ENJOY YOURSELF
Released 1989
Label PWL/Mushroom/Geffen
Chart Positions
UK No.1 AUS No.9



A hit movie, sold-out arena tour and relationship with INXS' Michael Hutchence did wonders for Kylie's self-confidence, prompting her to take a more active role in her career. Now based in London, Minogue was a regular on the city's thriving club scene and wanted that reflected in her own material. The resulting album, 1990's *Rhythm Of Love*, is a pop masterclass with one of the strongest singles runs in chart history.

Better The Devil You Know, takes its cues from D-Mob's *C'mon And Get My Love* (the vocalist of which, Cathy Dennis, would play a pivotal role in Kylie's career for a second time a decade later), while another big favourite of Minogue's – Deee-Lite – would inspire the 70s pastiche *Step Back In Time*. *What Do I Have To Do* incorporates Italo house-style piano riffs and thrashing electric guitars vie for prominence on the pounding *Shocked*.

Album cuts *Things Can Only Get Better* and *Always Find The Time* maintain the clubby momentum and a handful of swingbeat tracks represent Kylie's first musical foray outside the walls of The Hit Factory. Teamed with a new image dubbed 'SexKylie' in the press, *Rhythm Of Love* wasn't just an awakening, it was one for the world to see what Minogue was truly capable of.

RHYTHM OF LOVE
Released 1990
Label PWL/Mushroom
Chart Positions
UK No.9 AUS No.10

As the music scene changed beyond recognition at the start of the 1990s with the prominence of dance, hip-hop and New Jack Swing, SAW found their stranglehold on the charts lessening significantly and were subject to an intense backlash. Rick Astley, Jason Donovan and Bananarama (albeit temporarily) had all moved on, as had writer-producer Matt Aitken. It was highly expected that Kylie would be next, particularly as she'd fulfilled her three-album contract with PWL courtesy of *Rhythm Of Love*.

Finding herself in such a strong negotiating position, Kylie agreed to record another album for PWL on the condition that she be involved in the songwriting process, penning six tracks with Mike Stock and Pete Waterman.

With the classic SAW sound regarded as outdated, *Let's Get To It* saw a seismic shift in direction from upbeat pop tracks in favour of swingbeat, rave, R&B and acoustic balladry, with varying degrees of success.

When first single *Word Is Out* stalled at UK No.16 – Kylie's first to miss the Top 10 – the public made it known that swingbeat was not what they wanted from the singer. Meanwhile, the album's chart position was similarly disappointing, peaking at No.15 in the UK when released in October 1991.

But despite its underwhelming performance in the charts, *Let's Get To It* does have its moments – including its seductive bossa nova-style title track. *Right Here, Right Now* incorporates elements of Chicago house, *Too Much Of A Good Thing* borrows from Chic (with a cheeky snippet of Janet Jackson also included) while *Live And Learn* is an uplifting mid-tempo tune.

KYLIE AGREED TO ANOTHER ALBUM FOR PWL ON THE CONDITION THAT SHE BE INVOLVED IN THE SONGWRITING PROCESS

Orchestral ballad *If You Were With Me Now* and a cover of Chairmen Of The Board's *Give Me Just A Little More Time* were both major hits, but neither were indicative of the music Kylie really wanted to make – that was revealed with an epic makeover of sensual ballad *Finer Feelings* for its release as a single courtesy of Brothers In Rhythm. Although it missed the Top 10 in the UK, that collaboration signposted where Kylie was headed next.

LET'S GET TO IT
Released 1991
Label PWL/Mushroom
Chart Positions
UK No.15 US No.13

Road trips across the US as well as jaunts around the Far East were the physical manifestation of a voyage of self-discovery for Kylie in the mid-90s and both played an integral role in her sixth studio album. Her exposure to myriad cultures informed its sonic breadth, while Minogue's internal struggles presented her with lyrical gold, resulting in the most adventurous and personal album of her back catalogue.

1997's *Impossible Princess* sees Kylie strip back her pop star veneer, inviting fans to get to know her in a way they never had. Lazily labelled 'IndieKylie' based on the Manics' James Dean Bradfield collaboration *Some Kind Of Bliss*, it's much more than that.

Incorporating trip-hop, rock, techno and drum'n'bass, *Impossible Princess*' eclectic soundscapes encapsulate the late 90s. Standouts are the slow-burning synth-pop of *Breathe*, co-written and produced with Soft Cell's Dave Ball, and *Dreams*, a majestic ballad which marries dramatic strings with Eastern influences and features the lyric which gives the album its title.

The album received mixed reviews and was a commercial disappointment, but a vinyl reissue in 2022 saw it crack the Top 5 for the first time and undergo reappraisal, finally achieving the success and credit it so richly deserved.

IMPOSSIBLE PRINCESS
Released 1997
Label Deconstruction/ Mushroom
Chart Positions UK No.5 AUS No.3

Having checked out of the Hit Factory for a final time with a greatest hits collection, Kylie migrated to cooler climes, namely trendy dance label Deconstruction, which was home to M People, Bassheads and Robert Miles among others. Minogue's transition from pop icon to dance diva was gradual – from the clubby flavour of the *Rhythm Of Love* album to the rave tracks that she recorded under the moniker of Angel K in 1991, *Do You Dare?* and *Closer*, which were serviced to club DJs as white labels and later appeared as B-sides to the *Let's Get To It* singles. *I Guess I Like It Like That*, also from that album was later remixed and released as *Keep On Pumpin' It* by the Vision Masters and Tony King featuring Kylie. Signing to a dance label was the logical next step.

While many expected a deeply personal set of tracks from the newly-emancipated club diva-in-waiting, a hectic filming schedule for *Streetfighter* with Jean-Claude Van Damme limited Kylie's time, meaning she wound up with only one co-writer credit on the LP.

CONFIDE *IN ME* SETS THE SCENE FOR THE SOPHISTICATED POP-SOUL WHICH REVEALS ITSELF OVER NINE MORE TRACKS

The epic grandeur of opener *Confide In Me*, written and produced by Brothers In Rhythm and to this day a career highlight, perfectly sets the scene for the sophisticated pop-soul which reveals itself over nine more tracks. *Surrender* and *Automatic Love* are luxurious grooves underpinning sensual vocals from Kylie. In fine voice throughout, she's rarely sounded better than on the brooding second single *Put Yourself In My Place* and dramatic string-laden ballad *Dangerous Game*, on which her deep, rich tone veers effortlessly between soaring melodrama and subtle restraint.

If I Was Your Lover looks to the US R&B scene, evoking Janet Jackson both stylistically and titularly, and the bouncy house of *Where Is The Feeling?* evolves into an acid-jazz workout replete with impressive ad-libs. The sprawling deep house of *Where Has The Love Gone?* and Pet Shop Boys-penned *Falling* suffer from being overlong, while a cover of Northern Soul classic *Time Will Pass You By*, which closes the album, is let down by M People's tinny production.

Released in September 1994, the album peaked at No.4 in the UK and sold 120,000 copies. Though much lower than her PWL heyday, *Kylie Minogue* was a triumph in rebranding its creator.

KYLIE MINOGUE
Released 1994
Label Deconstruction/ Mushroom
Chart Positions UK No.4 AUS No.3

As bold, daring and enlightening as *Impossible Princess* was, dark and experimental was not what the public sought from Kylie, they looked to her for uplifting feelgood songs they could dance to – *Light Years* delivered that in spades. "Traded my sorrow for some joy that I borrowed from back in the day" could not have been a more fitting opening line.

Far from being a calculated move just to boost record sales, the fun, carefree flavour of the album was, as the lyric suggested, how Kylie felt in her own life. A mutual parting of ways with Deconstruction in 1999 led to discussions with various labels regarding her future and, after guesting on the Pet Shop Boys' *Nightlife* album, Kylie found Parlophone to be on the same page with regards to her next musical direction – pop.

FAR FROM BEING A CALCULATED MOVE TO BOOST SALES, THE CAREFREE FLAVOUR WAS HOW KYLIE FELT IN HER OWN LIFE

Working with Robbie Williams, Guy Chambers, Biffco and Steve Anderson among others, Kylie co-wrote 10 of the album's 14 songs to a brief that included keywords such as "beach", "poolside" and "cocktails" with a sonic template that evokes Abba, Donna Summer, Village People, Love Unlimited and Giorgio Moroder.

From the career-rejuvenating *Spinning Around* (her first UK No.1 single in a decade) and Balearic bliss of *On A Night Like This* to the pounding Eurodance of *Butterfly*, the (literal) bells and whistles of *Disco Down* and bubbling Moroder-esque synths of the title track is a non-stop tour-de-force of meticulously crafted pop songs.

Although intended as compliments, some reviews tended to focus on the album's frothy and camp elements – and with tracks such as the Copacabana-theatrics of *Loveboat* and rallying anthem *Your Disco Needs You*, they were perhaps justified – but such a narrative was in danger of pushing Kylie towards becoming a niche act, something that Parlophone were keen to avoid.

When it came to choosing a fifth UK single from *Light Years*, the record label vetoed the latter option despite Minogue's protestations, compensating her with a brand new track which would go on to alter the trajectory of her career forever.

LIGHT YEARS
Released 2000
Label Parlophone/ Mushroom
Chart Positions UK No.2 AUS No.1

Whilst reflecting on her career during an interview, Kylie once revealed that she did not appreciate the achievements of her PWL years until her tenure at Deconstruction when she wasn't landing those record sales and chart positions anymore and realised how impressive those accolades were.

Armed with that invaluable benefit of hindsight, *Light Years'* career rebirth was a second chance she was not going to pass up and Minogue began instantly working on its follow-up.

Ignited by *Can't Get You Out Of My Head*, a Rob Davis and Cathy Dennis-penned dark ode to obsessive love despite its la-la-la refrain, the track became the foundation for the album.

Manoeuvring Kylie away from the perceived campiness of her previous LP, Parlophone's directive was something sleeker, more polished and cool with *Can't Get You Out Of My Head* the ideal starting point. Released in September 2001, it topped the charts in over 40 countries, sold over one million in the UK and gave Minogue her first US success since *The Loco-Motion* in 1988.

While *that* track dominates the tracklisting of *Fever*, the album offers up plenty more dancefloor delights. The glacial flirtatiousness of second single *In Your Eyes* prolonged Kylie's grip on the charts as did the giddy Daft Punk-meets-Donna Summer euphoria of fan favourite *Love At First Sight*. *Come Into My World*, another Davis-Dennis banger, completes a singles run which rivals that of *Rhythm Of Love*.

The title track, with its medical innuendos is Carry On Kylie, while closer *Burning Up* is a manic mash-up of acoustic verses and a disco chorus. The remainder of *Fever* sticks largely to the Eurodance template with *More More More*, *Your Love* and *Fragile* the pick of the bunch, exemplifying an ability to elevate what could be substandard fare in the hands of a lesser singer (as proved by the myriad of *Fever* knock-offs that would bother the charts in subsequent years).

AWAY FROM THE CAMPINESS OF HER PREVIOUS ALBUM, THE DIRECTIVE WAS SOMETHING SLEEKER, POLISHED AND COOL

The disco-influenced *Dancefloor* could easily have appeared on *Light Years*, with *Give It To Me* the album's only real disappointment.

A global sensation, *Fever* remains the apex of Kylie's career thus far, topping the charts around the world with sales of more than six million copies.

FEVER
Released 2001
Label Parlophone/Mushroom/Capitol
Chart Positions
UK No.1 US No.3

Emerging from the darkest period of her life – a battle with breast cancer – Kylie returned in 2007 with her 10th studio album, a project she said she wanted to be both upbeat and fun. Having just endured her toughest times, music was medicine for the singer and, rather than dwell on what had happened, the optimistic star wanted to have fun in the studio and produce material she'd enjoy performing live.

An eclectic mish-mash of styles, *X's* genre-hopping tracklist jumps around from the frothy throwback to her SAW days, *Wow*, to the Gwen Stefani-esque cheerleader chants of *Heart Beat Rock*. The clashing synth stabs of Calvin Harris co-write *In My Arms* are euphoric bliss as are the brooding beats-and-bass of the New Order-inspired *The One*. *Like A Drug* evokes Visage's *Fade To Grey* and the vocodered *Speakerphone* is a many-sided masterpiece. It's only the shimmering William Orbit-esque *No More Rain* that alludes to her illness.

Fun, impersonal and varied – just as intended – *X* marks the spot.

X
Released 2007
Label Parlophone/Festival/Capitol
Chart Positions
UK No.4
AUS No.1

By 2010, a common criticism of Kylie's albums was their lack of cohesion. Both *Body Language* and *X* had covered countless styles with the only common denominator being Minogue herself. Halfway through the making of *Aphrodite*, recording having been completed with Jake Shears, Calvin Harris, The Nervo Twins and Kish Mauve among others, a writing session with Stuart Price sparked the idea that he come onboard in the role of executive producer, overseeing all of the tracks and mixing them to create a body of work as opposed to a collection of songs.

The decision paid off – *Aphrodite* hangs together as a consistent set, encompassing the soaring lead single *All The Lovers*, the feisty *Get Outta My Way* and clubby *Put Your Hands Up*, with the slightly sinister *Closer* also a highpoint. *Can't Beat The Feeling*, very much a part two of *Love At First Sight*, is a rousing finale. Topping the chart 22 years after her debut, *Aphrodite* was Kylie's first UK No.1 studio album since *Fever*.

APHRODITE
Released 2010
Label Parlophone/Festival/Capitol
Chart Positions
UK No.1
US No.19

Riding the wave of the most successful period of her career with *Fever*, it would have been easy for Minogue to churn out more of the same. However, as a cavalcade of Kylie clones, each replete with their robotic routines, futuristic fashions and electro-infused dance tracks began filling the charts, the singer made a conscious decision to step away from Eurodance in favour of a more laidback collection that encompassed synth-pop, R&B, 80s soul, funk and even hip-hop.

From hypnotic opener *Slow* – a brave choice of lead single and personal favourite of Kylie's (and her last UK No.1 single to date) – *Body Language* boasts some absolute gems. *Sweet Music* is a nod to *Control*-era Janet Jackson, the Kurtis Mantronik-produced *Promises* could be a lost S.O.S. Band track and the revved-up rap of *Secret (Take You Home)* even borrows a hook from Lisa Lisa & Cult Jam's classic *I Wonder If I Take You Home*. The poppy R&B of *Red Blooded Woman* mirrors Justin Timberlake's work with Timbaland, *Chocolate* is a silky-smooth delight and *Loving Days* oozes with sensuality.

Unfairly compared to sales of its once-in-a-lifetime predecessor, *Body Language* was nowhere near as successful but as a varied and competent collection of sleek, modern pop, it more than fulfilled its sonic brief.

BODY LANGUAGE
Released 2003
Label Parlophone/Festival/Capitol
Chart Positions
UK No.6 US No.42

Positioning herself as a serious contender to Mariah Carey's 'Queen Of Christmas' title, Minogue's seasonal gift to her fans collated traditional standards, original material and previously released covers of *Santa Baby* and *Let It Snow*.

While Kylie proves herself a fantastic interpreter of the classics, particularly Judy Garland's *Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas*, on which she delivers an astounding performance that immaculately conveys the sadness of the song, the choice to focus on the covers while promoting the album did it a disservice as it failed to give her originals their chance to shine as they deserved to.

Chris Martin co-write *Every Day's Like Christmas* is as soothing as a roaring open fire on a cold winter night and *White December*, like Mariah's perennial chart-topper, harks back to the glorious Phil Spector 60s classics and could have enjoyed a similar legacy had it been pushed. Long-time fans of the Minogue sisters had their yuletide wish granted with *100 Degrees*, a glitzy disco duet with sister Dannii.

Elsewhere, a cover of The Pretenders' *2000 Miles* holds up well next to Chrissie Hynde's beautiful original and a duet with Iggy Pop on *Christmas Wrapping* is as bizarre as you'd expect. A Christmas cracker that not even an appearance from James Corden can dampen.

KYLIE CHRISTMAS

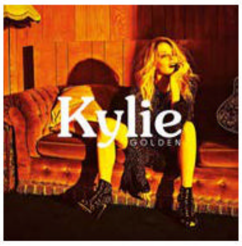
Released 2015
Label Parlophone/ Warner Bros
Chart Positions
UK No.12 Aus No.7

Following a year-long celebration of Kylie's 25th anniversary in music which culminated in the singer revisiting some of her biggest hits in orchestral or acoustic rearrangements on *The Abbey Road Sessions*, 2014's *Kiss Me Once*, appeared to be a manoeuvre to steer herself away from the 'legacy artist' tag and affirm herself as a contemporary one, a conclusion seemingly confirmed by a parting of ways with long-time manager Terry Blamey and signing to Jay-Z's management company, Roc Nation.

The shimmering title track, co-written and produced by Sia, is a superb throwback to the late 80s while *Les Sex* is a campy romp with its tongue placed firmly in its cheek. The ethereal *If Only* is a stunning ballad based around a tribal drum pattern and *Feels So Good* evokes Disclosure. Despite the dodgy title, *Sexercise*, an overtly sexual dubstep number, proved Kylie could hold her own against the likes of Britney and Rihanna and lead single, *Into The Blue*, was a perfect example of the upbeat melancholic tracks that Kylie does so well. A mixed bag with a lifeless Enrique Iglesias duet the only real dud.

KISS ME ONCE

Released 2014
Label Parlophone/ Warner Bros
Chart Positions
UK No.2
US No.31



Signing a new recording deal with BMG after leaving Parlophone in 2016 became the impetus for a career reset, offering up the chance to explore new territory. With initial sessions failing to wield suitable results, Kylie's arrival in the music city of Nashville – a trip originally planned only for writing not direction – had a profound effect, sparking creativity and informing the style of her next studio album.

Looking to her heroine Dolly Parton for divine intervention, the pairing of the country legend's aesthetic with Kylie's pop sensibility was a great match. While the concept at first appeared gimmicky, the resulting material spoke for itself.

Broken-hearted by the end of an engagement and facing her landmark 50th birthday (the reason for *Golden's* title), Kylie had plenty to say and co-wrote every song on the album. It was by far her most revealing statement since *Impossible Princess*.

A personal and professional triumph on which she wears her art on her sleeve, *Golden's* commercial success affirmed the public's adoration for Minogue, culminating in her drawing Glastonbury's largest ever crowd to her performance in the prestigious legends slot.

GOLDEN

Released 2018
Label BMG/ Mushroom
Chart Positions
UK No.1
US No.64

Of the many sonic detours that Kylie has taken us on over the course of the past 35 years, it's always her return to the dancefloor which seems to suit her best. She's spoken of singing into hairbrushes as a teenager to Abba, Donna Summer and Olivia Newton-John records, thus revealing her musical pedigree. Therefore, disco being a touchstone she returns to is no surprise.

> DISCO MET WITH WIDESPREAD CRITICAL ACCLAIM AND ENTERED THE UK ALBUMS CHART AT NO.1

Triggered by audience reactions to a Studio 54-themed segment of her Golden Tour, Minogue, along with personnel including long-standing collaborator Richard 'Biff' Stannard, plus newer cohorts such as Ash Howes and Sky Adams, began drafting fresh music in the autumn of 2019. However, as the world came to an abrupt halt in March 2020, work took on a different form, with sessions conducted over Zoom forcing Kylie to navigate a home studio set-up for the first time. Logistics aside, Minogue questioned whether people would want an album so entrenched in celebrating music's unification and the dancefloor. It was decided to carry on in the hope its positivity would be uplifting (it became the unofficial soundtrack to kitchen discos).

One of the earliest cuts, *Say Something*, with its prophetic lyric pertaining to how we would all feel when separated from our loved ones in 2020, draws more from early-80s synth-pop than disco and is an anomaly on an album which otherwise revels in its references to Baccara (*Miss A Thing*) and Tina Charles (*Magic*) via Shalamar (*Dance Floor Darling*). *Where Does The DJ Go?*'s effervescence evokes her own disco opus *Light Years* while *Real Groove* and *Supernova* are superb throwbacks to the funky dance tracks of the early 80s.

Met with widespread critical acclaim and entering the UK albums chart at No.1, Kylie could not have been happier with *Disco*'s reception, particularly given that it landed her in the record books as the first female artist to achieve No.1 albums in five consecutive decades.

DISCO

Released 2020
Label BMG/Mushroom
Chart Positions
UK No.1 US No.26

DEVOTED FANS SHOW US THEIR COLLECTIONS AND POP MEMORABILIA

ROBIN SCOTT

IAN HARRIS, LONDON

Q When did you first become a Superfan of Robin Scott and why do you like him?

A I saw M perform *Pop Muzik* on *Top Of The Pops* when I was seven. I'd never heard anything like it and it's still my favourite record. I like Robin's inventiveness that he went from 1960s folkie to synth-pop to world music and beyond.

Q What do you have in your collection?

A Hundreds of records, CDs, tapes, promos, demos, acetates and posters as well as sheet music, promotional clothing, badges, photos and press releases. I have well over 100 different copies of *Pop Muzik* alone from around the world.

Q How much have you spent on it?

A Not too much. There's not a great deal of competition for M items, but they can be hard to track down – it's not the most search engine-friendly of names!

Q What's your favourite item in the collection?

A The signed fan club 12" EP from Christmas 1981. I didn't know that existed until I stumbled upon it.

Q Have you ever had the chance to meet Robin?

A Yes, a few times. I first met him walking around at Tribal Gathering where I'd gone to see Kraftwerk. He also invited me to his 50th birthday party where he performed a live set, something I never thought I'd see.

Q If you could ask Robin one question, what would it be?

A What are the lyrics to *Danube*? I can never work them out.

Q Is there one Holy Grail item of memorabilia that you would love to get your hands on?

A A silver or gold disc for *Pop Muzik*. I won one once on eBay, but it arrived smashed to pieces and I had to send it back.

Smooth operator: Robert Palmer in May 1986

FAR FROM THE DILETTANTE PLAYBOY HIS IMAGE SUGGESTED, COULD THE SHAPESHIFTING ROBERT PALMER BE ONE OF THE MOST UNDERRATED SINGER-SONGWRITERS OF HIS ERA? AS A NEW BOXSET COMPILES HIS RECORDINGS FOR THE ISLAND LABEL, WE REASSESS HIS CHAMELEON-LIKE SOLO CAREER AND COLLABORATIONS WITH SUPERGROUP THE POWER STATION.

STEVE O'BRIEN

SIMPLY IRREFUTABLE

© Getty

"I hardly ever get asked about music," Robert Palmer told *The Guardian* in 2002. "I do, however, get asked about the *Addicted To Love* video and my suits on a daily basis."

When he died just a year later, of a heart attack at the age of just 54, sadly that's what most of the obituaries focused on – the rock-pop playboy who seemingly prized style over substance, hedonism over musical integrity. But while other sharp-suited lotharios such as Bryan Ferry are celebrated as rakish geniuses, somehow Palmer's considerable contribution to music seems to have been cold-shouldered.

The image of Robert Palmer that's seared into our collective memory is of him performing amidst a bevy of identical-clad supermodels, a perfectly coiffed sophisticate luxuriating in the pages of a *Vogue* photoshoot. The *Addicted To Love* video was one of the defining promos of the 80s, and proved so insanely popular that Palmer reheated the idea for follow-up singles *I Didn't Mean To Turn You On* and *Simply Irresistible*. Those visuals, however, have overshadowed pretty much everything else Palmer ever did, and caricatured him as someone for whom music was somehow secondary to looking good. That he was once honoured as *Rolling Stone*'s Best Dressed Male Rock Artist and told interviewers "I guess I always treated music as a hobby" only added to the sense that he was not somebody to be taken seriously.

Yet a closer look at his music suggests a more compelling and intriguing figure than the obits painted. This was an artist who, over a career spanning 30 years, proved as restless and daredevil a spirit as David Bowie taking in such genres as funk, synth-pop, soul, reggae, jazz, arena rock, bossa nova and blues. You see, there was always more to Robert Palmer than met the eye. Even his beginnings belied his image as a designer-suited Romeo.

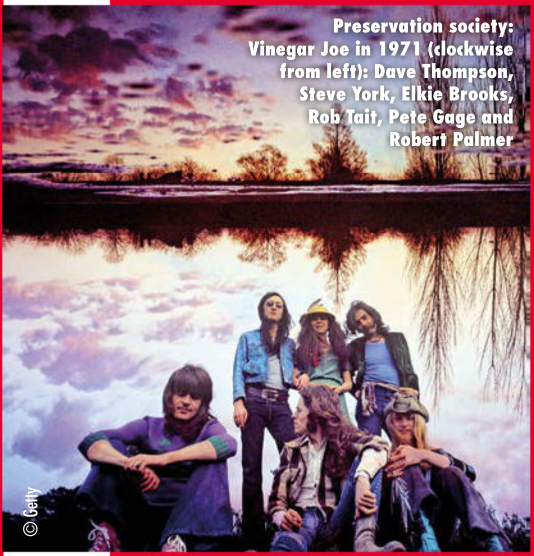
Not many pop stars – especially ones that hang out with supermodels – have Batley in West Yorkshire on their birth certificate. Yet this is where Robert Allen Palmer came into the world on 19 January 1949. That said, his family upped sticks to Malta when he was just a few months old, returning to Yorkshire 11 years later, this time to Scarborough where his mother ran a guest house and where his father was now stationed in the Royal Navy. Robert's years abroad meant that, by the time he was at his new school, he was "the only one who spoke Oxford English." At school, as in music decades later, Robert Palmer never quite fitted in.

Palmer poses in New York in 1978, the year of his self-produced ***Double Fun*** album

"I HARDLY EVER GET ASKED ABOUT MUSIC. I DO, HOWEVER, GET ASKED ABOUT THE ADDICTED TO LOVE VIDEO AND MY SUITS ON A DAILY BASIS."
ROBERT PALMER

By this point, he was already obsessed with music. While in Malta, he'd lapped up the sounds of Otis Redding, Billie Holliday, Wilson Pickett and Nat King Cole on the American Armed Forces Radio Network. By 15, he'd enrolled at Scarborough School Of Art & Design and set up his first band, The Mandrakes. After a cleaner accidentally binned much of his coursework, Palmer dropped out and decided his energies would be better spent cultivating a career in music. And it worked – even though all of the bandmembers were teenagers, The Mandrakes secured some high-profile gigs at the time, supporting The Who and Jimi Hendrix as well as touring Scandinavia.

Palmer was still a teen when he joined his next band. The R&B-powered Alan Bown Set were already a favourite on the live circuit when they approached Robert to replace their hastily-departed frontman Jess Roden for a show at the Scarborough Spa. Palmer would record one album with the band, titled *The Alan Bown!*, before moving to London where he hooked up with a jazz-rock fusion band named Dada. Among its 12 members was a singer named Elkie Brooks (yes, that one) and her husband Pete Gage and, before too long, the three split from Dada to form their own blues rock outfit, Vinegar Joe.



Preservation society: Vinegar Joe in 1971 (clockwise from left): Dave Thompson, Steve York, Elkie Brooks, Rob Tait, Pete Gage and Robert Palmer

Though they recorded three albums for Island Records, commercial success somehow eluded Vinegar Joe and they split up in 1974. But Island, and specifically its founder Chris Blackwell, had high hopes for the band's co-vocalist and signed Palmer on a solo deal, packing him off to New Orleans to work with a cherry-picked group of top session musicians.

Sneakin' Sally Through The Alley arrived in September 1974 and saw Palmer playing alongside American funk group The Meters, keyboardist Art Neville and Lowell George of Little Feat. Though it only managed a No.107 placing on the US Billboard Chart, Island still had enough faith in their freshest signing for a second long-player. *Pressure Drop* from 1975 displayed more of a reggae touch – its title track was a cover version of the classic Toots & The Maytals cut – but again failed to take off commercially. Even its self-penned lead single, the brilliant, yacht rock-anticipating *Give Me An Inch*, didn't chart.

1976's *Some People Can Do What They Like* LP fared better (No.46 in the UK, No.68 in the US), but still struggled to produce a hit. The Caribbean-accented *Every Kinda People* – written by former Free bassist Andy Fraser

– from 1978's *Double Fun*, would be the first of Palmer's singles to break the UK and US charts, peaking at No.16 in the States and No.53 on home soil. Where *Double Fun* had boomeranged from blue-eyed soul to disco and funk to lounge jazz, Palmer's next album, the following year's *Secrets*, would be more straight-ahead rock, producing a US Top 20 hit in *Bad Case Of Loving You (Doctor, Doctor)*, a robust cover of the Moon Martin original.

1980's *Clues* found Palmer branching out even further, embracing New Wave on the Talking Heads-aping *Looking For Clues* (that band's drummer Chris Frantz plays on the track, a return favour after Palmer guested on their 1980 album *Remain In Light*) and working with Gary Numan on the beguiling *Found You Now*. Lead single *Johnny And Mary*, despite its sombre, sequencer-driven eeriness, would be the album's biggest hit. Certainly by now, the public were becoming aware of Robert Palmer, even if they couldn't quite get a handle on what he was about.

After scoring a UK No.16 hit with a cover of The Persuaders' *Some Guys Have All The Luck* (from his *Maybe It's Live* album), Palmer looked to calypso and soca for 1983's *Pride*. Despite *Some Guys'*... success, *Pride*'s duplet of singles – *You Are In My System* and *You Can Have It (Take My Heart)* – failed to tickle the Top 40.

On 23 July 1983, three months after the release of *Pride*, Palmer performed at Duran Duran's open air charity concert at Villa Park, the home ground of Aston Villa FC, and, backstage, started chatting with John Taylor and Andy Taylor. It was a friendship that would eventually lead to the formation of one of the 80s' great supergroups – The Power Station.

Convened initially by John and Andy (along with Chic's Tony Thompson and Bernard Edwards) as a backing band for John's then-girlfriend Bebe Buell's planned solo record, the duo had believed that there was a future for the group beyond this one-off, only with a revolving line-up of vocalists. While Mick Jagger, Billy Idol and Richard Butler of The Psychedelic Furs were all considered for the planned album, it was only after they'd invited Palmer to record vocals for the song *Communication* that they decided he was their man, hiring him to sing lead on all eight tracks of 1985's self-titled LP. Three singles were released from the record, *Some Like It Hot* (UK No.14), *Get It On* (UK No.22) and *Communication* (UK No.75), with the album peaking at No.12 on home soil and No.6 in the US.

The success of The Power Station project led to a planned tour, only for Palmer to quit the band, forcing them to hire Michael Des Barres (formerly of Silverhead, Chequered Past and Detective) for the series of gigs. The sometime actor would also cover for Palmer for The Power Station's turn at July 1985's Live Aid concert.

Whatever Palmer's reasons for leaving, it's undeniable that his time in The Power Station significantly increased his profile. In *Number One* magazine,

Downtime at Shinjyuku Central Park in Tokyo, October 1985

© Getty

Palmer in 1986, the year *Addicted To Love* made US No.1

© Getty

Model Behaviour

The *Addicted To Love* video was directed by the late British fashion photographer Terence Donovan and featured Palmer performing with a troupe of mannequin-like models made up in the style of Patrick Nagel, whose artwork graced the cover of Duran Duran's *Rio* album. The 'group' consisted of Julie Pankhurst (keyboards), Patty Kelly (guitar), Mak Gilchrist (bass), Julia Bolino (guitar), and Kathy Davies (drums). Reflecting on the video to *Q* magazine, Gilchrist said: "I was 21 and got the part on the strength of my modelling book. We were meant to look and 'act' like showroom mannequins. Terence Donovan got us tipsy on a bottle of wine but as we were having our make-up retouched, I lost balance on my heels and knocked the top of my guitar into the back of Robert's head, and his face then hit the microphone."

Palmer himself was dismissive of the video – yet he recycled the concept for two further promos – *I Didn't Mean To Turn You On* and *Simply Irresistible*. In the years since, it's proved to have quite the afterlife – Weird Al Yankovich parodied the song and video as *Addicted To Spuds* (with a bunch of Ms Potato-Heads replacing the girls), Pepsi referenced it in a 2002 ad featuring Britney Spears and, of course, there's that video for *Christmas Is All Around Us* from Richard Curtis' *Love Actually*. Proof of how iconic the *Addicted To Love* clip remains, 37 years on.

Palmer hit back at claims that he joined the group for the bucks: "Firstly, I didn't need the money," he said, "and secondly the cash was a long time coming. It wasn't exactly an experience that set me up for retirement."

By the time of Palmer's next record, 1985's *Riptide*, he was a bona fide star and the album would become the singer's biggest hit to date, peaking at No.5 in the UK and No.8 in the States. Proving there were no hard feelings, Andy Taylor and Tony Thompson guested, while Bernard Edwards was on hand as producer. No wonder that, in many ways, it sounds like another Power Station album. When it was suggested by *Number One* magazine that he'd appropriated the Power Station sound for his own LP, the singer snapped back: "Listen, I gave The Power Station that sound. They took it from me, not the other way around."

The album would birth Palmer's signature hit. *Addicted To Love* – no doubt helped by *that* video – would peak at No.5 in the UK and No.1 in the US. The track had actually been intended as a duet with Chaka Khan, only her record company wouldn't grant her a release to work for Island. Khan's vocals couldn't be used on the track, but Palmer credited her for her part in developing it as well as her contributions to the arrangement. A total of five singles were released from *Riptide* and those blazingly iconic videos secured Palmer a regular place on MTV's playlists.

But it wasn't to last. *Riptide*'s follow-up, *Heavy Nova*, took Palmer's propensity for fusing genres too far, with its whisking together of – as implied by its title – heavy rock and bossa nova. Though *Simply Irresistible* (US No.2) and *She Makes My Day* (UK No.6) were hits, the album only made No.17 in the UK and No.13 on the Billboard.

1990's *Don't Explain* performed slightly better. A cover of Marvin Gaye's *Mercy Mercy Me/I Want You* and a buddy-up with UB40 on a version of Bob Dylan's *I'll Be Your Baby Tonight* both went Top 10 but suggested that inspiration was in short supply.

Palmer in 1980, the year he was first nominated for a Grammy

"IT WASN'T AN EXPERIENCE THAT SET ME UP FOR RETIREMENT… I GAVE THE POWER STATION THAT SOUND, NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND."

ROBERT PALMER

© Getty

Palmer wields the mic at the Warfield Theater in San Francisco, April 1986

© Getty

The songs would be Palmer's last UK singles to go Top 20.

The 90s would see Palmer drifting creatively. *Ridin' High* (1992) saw the singer delve into the Great American Songbook, while 1994's *Honey* tilted uncomfortably toward AOR. A Power Station reunion in 1995 produced one final album, *Living In Fear*, which failed to hit the creative and commercial heights of that first record 10 years before. He returned to his love of R&B for 1999's *Rhythm & Blues* and reached back to Delta blues for his final studio album, 2003's *Drive*.

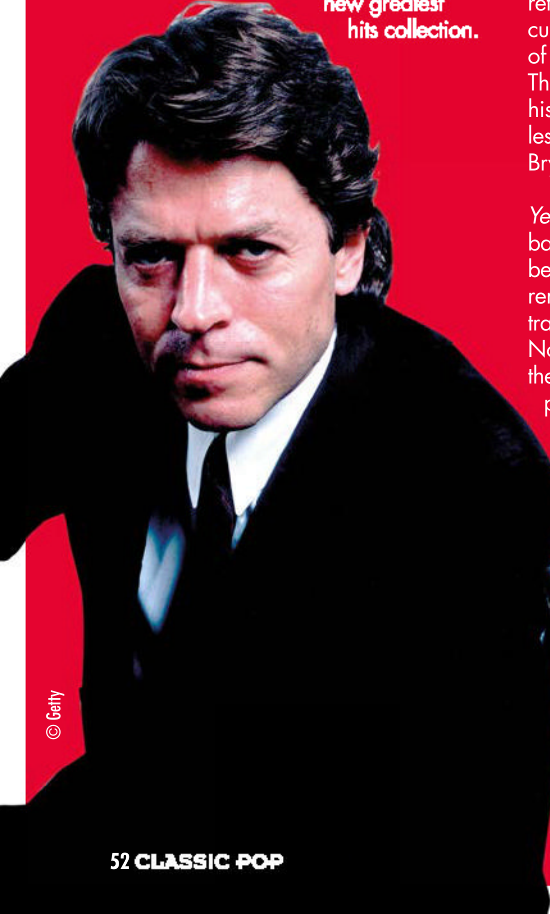
There were, however, the seemingly endless compilations. For much of the 90s, Palmer was rarely off the sofas of daytime TV, promoting some new greatest hits collection. 1989's *Addictions Vol.1* made UK No.7, *Vol.2* from 1992 reached UK No.12 and 1995's *Very Best Of Robert Palmer* hit UK No.4. Even if the public weren't keen on new Robert Palmer material, it seemed, they were still fans of his late-80s purple patch.

Yet critically, Palmer was and remains shamefully misunderstood. Maybe it was the care that he devoted to the visual presentation of his music. To many, who prize authenticity over artifice, his cultivated veneer of sophistication proved off-putting, while his continually shapeshifting musical persona meant that he appeared like a dilettante, dabbling in, but never fully committing to, a plethora of genres.

Yet one could argue that Robert Palmer's vast oeuvre was one that reflected his adventurous and ever-curious attitude to music. And that image of him as a rock and pop playboy? There are fewer scantily clad females on his record sleeves than you imagine, far less than the generally more respected Bryan Ferry. Another misinterpretation.

Island's latest compilation, *The Island Years 1974-1985*, is a chance to look back at Palmer's output before he became that MTV favourite and to remember what a fearless and trailblazing artist he really was. Not everything works, but you could say the same about Bowie, or any other perma-shapeshifting musician. And judging him on that one video is akin to only remembering David Bowie for *Let's Dance*.

If any 80s performer is worthy of a deeper dive, it's Robert Palmer, that most criminally underrated of musical chameleons.



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● ***The Island* Years: 1974-1985 is out now via Edsel/Demon and reviewed on page 87**

© Getty

The Power Station, Take 2

The Power Station returned in 1995, 10 years after the release of their first album, but the reunion would be short-lived. Despite all four members – Robert Palmer, Andy Taylor, John Taylor and Tony Thompson – agreeing to work on the planned LP, John Taylor, who was going through a divorce as well as entering drug rehab, pulled out before recording was due to take place. Instead, producer Bernard Edwards played all the bass parts on what would become *Living In Fear*. John Taylor is credited on the album for writing and arranging, but isn't listed as a group member.

Sadly, Edwards died of pneumonia shortly before the album's release and the record is dedicated to his memory. It failed to perform as well as their debut, and didn't chart in the UK or US. Its sole single, *She Can Rock It*, spent one week at UK No.63 before dropping out of the charts.

Palmer, Andy Taylor and Tony Thompson toured in 1996, with Pink Floyd's session ace Guy Pratt on bass and Thunder's Luke Morley as second guitarist.

Tony Thompson died in November 2003, just two months after Robert Palmer. Two years later EMI released a new version of their first record to commemorate its 20th anniversary featuring the original eight-song LP, seven bonus tracks (including *Someday, Somehow, Someone's Gotta Pay* sung by Michael Des Barres), as well as a 40-minute DVD.

CLASSIC POP

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CLASSIC POP TOP TEN

WEEK ENDING 31 MARCH 1990

IT'S GETTIN' KINDA HEAVY IN A WEEK OF JAM HOT BASSLINES, BLISSED-OUT BEATLES, SAXY SOLOING, ENDLESS LOVING – AND THE LOVE SHACK, BABY!

STEVE O'BRIEN

01 (12) **SNAP!**
THE POWER
(ARISTA)

02 (2) **THE B-52's**
LOVE SHACK
(REPRISE)

THE POWER
SNAP! (ARISTA)

One of the most ubiquitous songs of the 90s, Snap!'s *The Power* was forged around a rap from Chill Rob G's 1985 track *Let The Words Flow* and a sample of singer Jocelyn Brown's dance classic from the same year, *Love's Gonna Get You*. For the main vocal, Snap! (actually the German production team of Michael Münzing and Luca Anzilotti) sought out Chaka Khan, only for the R&B ledge to suggest Penny Ford, her main backup singer. Ford took the gig, jetted off to Deutschland and spent three days working on the song, with Münzing and Anzilotti plying her with Champagne and cigarettes. "I just sang the first thing that came off the top of my head," Ford later told *Songfacts*, "because I didn't understand that music, and I didn't think I'd ever have to hear it again." The eventual single replaced Chill Rob G's rap with one by Turbo B, whom the production duo discovered at an American army base in Germany.

BLUE SAVANNAH
ERASURE
(MUTE)

Released as the third platter off Vince and Andy's fourth long-player, *Wild!*, *Blue Savannah* remains one of the duo's most popular and successful songs, reaching No.3 in the UK and hitting No.1 in Israel. The video, directed by Godley & Creme's Kevin Godley, shows the pair performing the track in a large white room, which gradually gets splattered, along with Vince and Andy, with blue paint. The single as it stands is sublime, but do check out Shep Pettibone's *Out Of The Blue* remix, which you can hear on the anthology *From Moscow To Mars* and on their RSD 2020 release – on blue vinyl, no less.

LOVE SHACK
THE B-52's
(REPRISE)

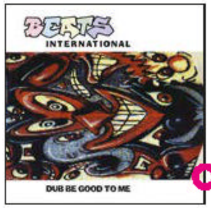
Despite having been going 14 years by 1990, *Love Shack* was the first ever UK Top 10 hit for the Athens, Georgia, outfit (*Rock Lobster*, their artfully eccentric debut, charted at No.37 in 1978 and No.12 on a 1986 reissue). The song was inspired by a club outside of their hometown named the Hawaiian Ha-Le, a hipster dive that happened to be where the band composed *Rock Lobster* ("It was a really cool place," Cindy Wilson told *Songfacts*, "a run-down love shack kind of thing, but it was a disco"). Check out the Adam Bernstein-directed promo (which would win The B52's a Best Group Video gong at the 1990 MTV Video Music Awards) to see a young RuPaul.

STRAWBERRY FIELDS FOREVER
CANDY FLIP
(DEBUT)

If you were to ever conduct a poll on the best Beatles cover version, there's little likelihood of Candy Flip's swivel-eyed version of *Strawberry Fields Forever* bagging the top spot. Named after a slang term for taking ecstasy and LSD at the same time (don't try it at home, kids), Candy Flip (aka Danny Spencer and Ric Peet) scored their only hit with this ill-conceived cover which – like every other dance smash at the time it seems – also sampled the drum beat from James Brown's *Funky Drummer*. Candy Flip released their sole album, *Madstock*... *The Continuing Adventures Of Bubblecar Fish*, in March 1990, and put out three more singles,

none of which climbed higher than No.60. The duo split up soon afterwards with Spencer going on to form Sound 5 and Peet moving into music production.

▲	03	(6) **CANDY FLIP** **STRAWBERRY FIELDS FOREVER** (DEBUT)
▼	04	(3) **ERASURE** **BLUE SAVANNAH** (MUTE)
▼	05	(1) **BEATS INTERNATIONAL FEAT LINDY LAYTON** **DUB BE GOOD TO ME** (GO! BEAT)
▲	06	(7) **DAVID A STEWART FEAT CANDY DULFER** **LILY WAS HERE** (RCA)
▼	07	(5) **NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK** **I'LL BE LOVING YOU (FOREVER)** (CBS)
▲	08	(17) **THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS** **BIRDHOUSE IN YOUR SOUL** (ELEKTRA)
▼	09	(4) **JIVE BUNNY AND THE MASTERMIXERS** **THAT SOUNDS GOOD TO ME** (MUSIC FACTORY DANCE)
▼	10	(8) **MICHAEL BOLTON** **HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO LIVE WITHOUT YOU** (CBS)

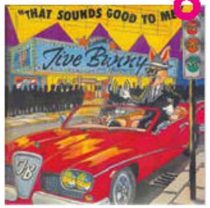


DUB BE GOOD TO ME
BEATS INTERNATIONAL FEAT LINDY LAYTON
(GO! BEAT)

Penned by a pre-Fatboy Slim Norman Cook, *Dub Be Good To Me* started life as an instrumental titled 'The Invasion Of The Estate Agents'. Add a dash of The SOS Band's *Just Be Good To Me* and voila, you've got yourself a No.1. Built around the bassline from The Clash's *Guns Of Brixton* and the harmonica part from Sergio Leone's western classic, *Once Upon A Time In The West, Dub Be Good To Me* features the vocals of Lindy Layton and David John-Baptiste (who handles the words "tank fly boss walk jam nitty gritty you're listening to the boy from the big bad city, this is jam hot, this is jam hot"). The musical collective released two albums during their brief life, 1990's *Let Them Eat Bingo* (UK No.17) and the following year's non-charting *Excursion On The Version.*

I'LL BE LOVING YOU (FOREVER)
NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK
(CBS)

New Kids' third single off their No.2-charting sophomore LP, *I'll Be Loving You (Forever)* was the boys' first ballad, no doubt sending female fans' hearts aflutter in the spring of 1990. This Philly soul-powered number hit the public's G-spot so much it gave Jordan (who handles lead vocals), Jonathan, Joey, Donnie and Danny their first US No.1. New Kids would enjoy another six Top 10 singles in the UK chart over the next 18 months, splitting after their fourth LP, 1994's *Face the Music.* They reformed in 2008 and have since released that year's *The Block* and 2013's *10.*



THAT SOUNDS GOOD TO ME
JIVE BUNNY AND THE MASTERMIXERS
(MUSIC FACTORY DANCE)

More 50s nostalgia for those with attention deficit disorder, courtesy of that cartoon rabbit who crazily notched up three No.1s in 1989. This fourth compilation of vintage jukebox faves fared a little worse, peaking at No.4, but still showed that the public were hungry for the past, especially if it was on fast-forward.

HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO LIVE WITHOUT YOU
MICHAEL BOLTON (CBS)

Despite Michael Bolton co-writing *How Am I Supposed To Live Without You* in 1982, his wasn't the first version to reach the charts. Laura Branigan had a Billboard No.12 hit with the track in 1983, with Bolton's own take arriving seven years later. It would become a massive success, peaking at No.1 in the US and No.3 in Blighty.

LILY WAS HERE
DAVID A STEWART FEAT CANDY DULFER
(RCA)

Dave Stewart and Candy Dulfer's sexy, saxy single became *the* make-out instrumental of 1990, peaking at No.6 in the UK and going Top 10 across Europe. The song was spun from the Dutch movie *De Kassière* (titled *Lily Was Here* in Britain), for which Stewart was composer (Eurythmics' *Here Comes The Rain Again* also features on the soundtrack). Stewart had invited the Amsterdam-born Dulfer to play saxophone on the track. At the time, Dulfer hadn't put out anything under her own name, but *Lily Was Here*'s success led to her releasing the Grammy-nominated *Saxuality* studio album in June 1990.

BIRDHOUSE IN YOUR SOUL
THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS
(ELEKTRA)

In the UK, they're the very definition of a one-hit wonder, a band who struck gold with one student disco staple, never to be heard of again. Except They Might Be Giants (otherwise known as John Flansburgh and John Linnell) had been performing long before this indie earworm and are still going strong today. Released as the lead disc from the boys' third album, *Flood*, and masterminded by the production team of Clive Langer and Alan Winstanley it is, according to Linnell, a song about a night light. "It's written from the perspective of a night light serenading the occupant of its room," he says on the band's website. "The thing is, there are so many syllables in the songs that we have to come up with something to fill the spaces. So it ends up being kind of Gilbert & Sullivany."

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF A MAN CALLED TERRY

IN DECEMBER, WE LOST ONE OF BRITISH POP'S MOST SIGNIFICANT FIGURES WITH THE SAD PASSING OF **TERRY HALL**. SHOOTING TO FAME WITH THE SPECIALS, HE ALSO BROKE THE MOULD WITH HIS NEXT BAND, TOO. WE CELEBRATE HIS LEGACY AND, WITH THE HELP OF NEVILLE STAPLE AND LYNVAL GOLDING, TAKE A LOOK BACK AT HIS INNOVATIVE WORK WITH FUN BOY THREE...

DAN BIGGANE

Much Too Young: The late Terry Hall (centre) with ska legends The Specials in a promotional shot, circa 1978

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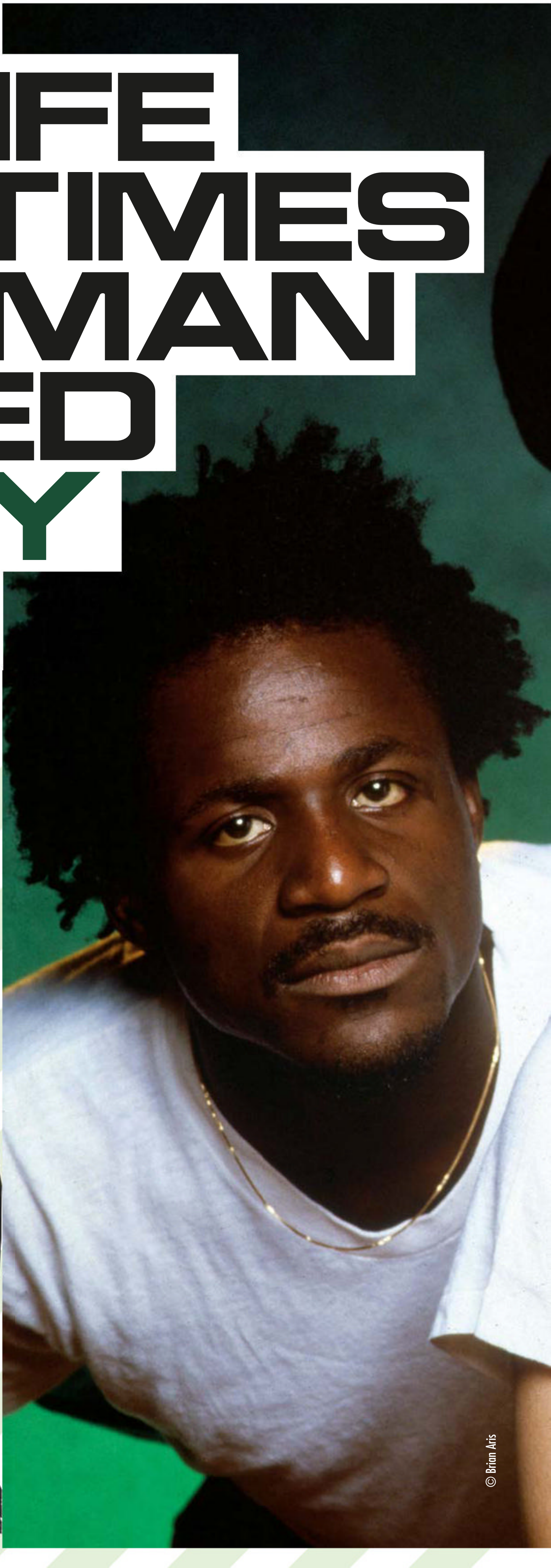

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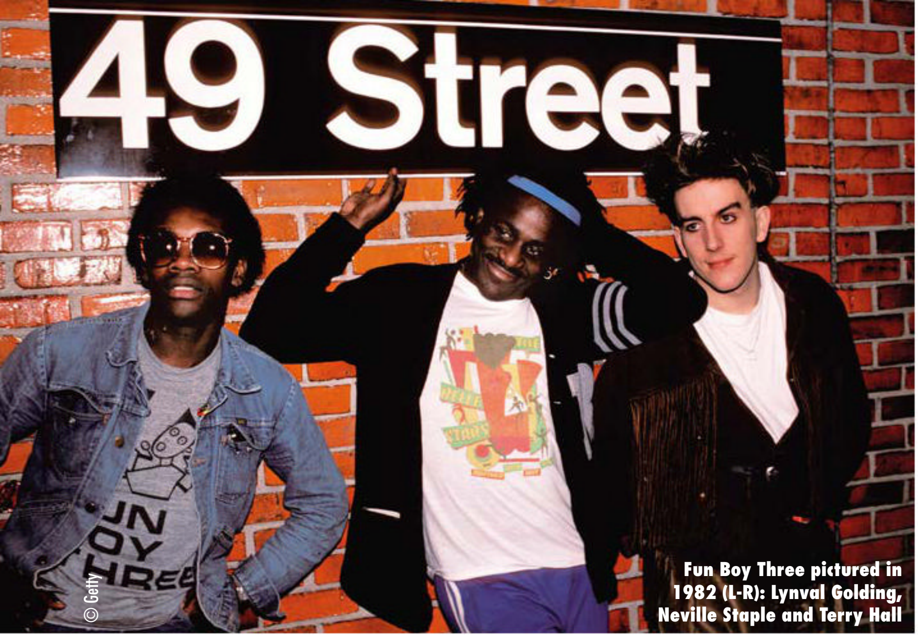
Fun Boy Three (L-R):
Neville Staple,
Lynval Golding
and Terry Hall



Fun Boy Three pictured in 1982 (L-R): Lynval Golding, Neville Staple and Terry Hall

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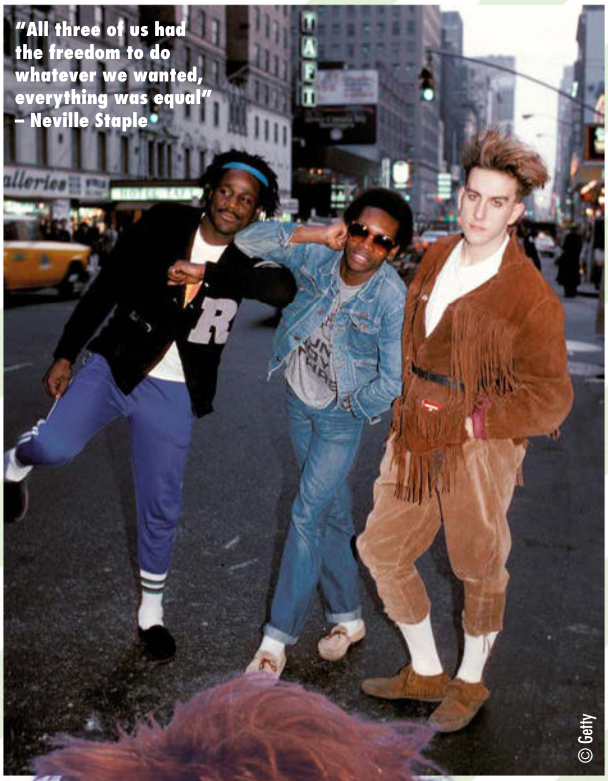
SEALING THEIR PLACE IN THE POP PANTHEON



"All three of us had the freedom to do whatever we wanted, everything was equal" – Neville Staple

© Getty

On 18 December 2022, British music mourned the loss of one of its most endearing and iconic stars when it was announced that the singer of ground-breaking Coventry collective The Specials and founding member of Fun Boy Three, Terry Hall, had died at the age of 63 after a short battle with cancer.

"It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of our beautiful friend, brother and one of the most brilliant singers, songwriters and lyricists that this country has ever produced," stated The Specials via social media. "Terry was a wonderful husband and father and one of the kindest, funniest and most genuine of souls."

Just 11 days previous, *Classic Pop* spoke to Hall's former Fun Boy Three cohorts, guitarist Lynval Golding and vocalist Neville Staple, to look back and celebrate the trio's oft-overlooked body of work. During our conversation, Golding describes Hall as a "very quiet and private man," before telling us how he was, "a very bright and highly intelligent intellectual," praising him for his songwriting talents for which the guitarist believed he was deserving of more recognition.

Following the announcement, Staple paid his respects online: "I was deeply saddened to hear about Terry Hall's passing... We knew Terry had been unwell but didn't realise how serious things had become until recently."

"In the music world," Staple continued, "people have many ups and downs, but I will hang on to the great memories of Terry and I, making history fronting The Specials and Fun Boy Three together."

DAWNING OF A NEW ERA

Born in Coventry in 1959, Hall joined The Specials as their vocalist shortly after the band was formed by Jerry Dammers in 1977. Combining the abrasive attitude of punk with the spirited danceability of ska, the group enjoyed success with a string of hit singles on Dammers' independent record label, 2 Tone.

Scoring UK Top 10s with *Gangsters*, *A Message To You Rudy*, the *Too Much Too Young* EP, *Rat Race*, *Stereotype* and *Do Nothing*, alongside two Top 5 albums, *Specials* (1979) and *More Specials* (1980), the band's legacy would be cemented forever with their haunting chart-topper, *Ghost Town*. Hall had once said that he didn't believe music could change anything, stating: "All you can do is put your point across", but in one politically charged standalone single,

"I will hang on to the great memories of Terry and I, making history fronting The Specials and Fun Boy Three together"
NEVILLE STAPLE

© Davies Starr

Formed by vocalist Belinda Carlisle and guitarist Jane Wiedlin (pictured), The Go-Go's supported both Madness and The Specials on their home turf of Los Angeles, the group were invited to join the latter's Seaside Tour of the UK in 1980.

"It was an amazing time," recalls Lynval Golding. "Those girls were so lovely, and we had an absolute riot on the road with them."

While The Go-Go's would regularly receive negative responses from certain violent, misogynistic aspects of the audience on stage, behind the scenes an on-tour affair developed between Terry Hall and Wiedlin, which would be chronicled in the hit song *Our Lips Are Sealed*.

Wiedlin told *Classic Pop* in Issue 73: "Terry and I had a little bit of a tour romance. When I returned to California, we continued to write each other little letters. He would send me lyrics and said: 'Someday I'm going to have my own band and it's going to be great.'"

Based around the words Hall had sent, Wiedlin co-wrote *Our Lips Are Sealed*, which gifted The Go-Go's a Top 20 US hit. When Hall formed that 'great band', he'd previously mentioned, they recorded a significantly more sombre take and it would prove to be Fun Boy Three's last hit, peaking at No.7 in May 1983. "It's funny," admitted Wiedlin, "I think most people over there thought their version was the original! I loved what they did – it sounded so different."

The admiration is mutual. Golding says: "I loved their version, it's really nice, so clean and so American."

Reacting to Hall's passing, Wiedlin posted: "He was a lovely, sensitive, talented, and unique person... *Our Lips Are Sealed* will forever tie us together in music history."

The Specials had encapsulated the absolute despair which existed within a deeply divided Britain under Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

While *Ghost Town* topped the UK charts for three weeks during the summer of 1981, divisions had also started to develop within the band. Talking from Jamaica, Golding tells *Classic Pop*: "*Ghost Town* is such a brilliant record, but it was around that time that things had gotten a little bit difficult for some of us in The Specials. I think we were going through a bit of a patchy spot. We'd been touring and living out of each other's pockets for a long while, so it was time to take a bit of a break and give each other some room to breathe."

"To be honest, everything was getting to be too heavy," concurs Staple. "With The Specials there was one general and if you tried to suggest something different, it was your head on that block. I was just a kid from the streets and didn't go to college or anything like that. So, once you go up against a very well-educated guy like Jerry, you just had to step down and take a back seat. I never felt like my input fully got acknowledged and after a while it began to play on my mind.

"I had shared the lead vocals on *Ghost Town* with Terry and would've liked for that vibe to continue on into our next album. However, Jerry wanted to take our sound elsewhere and create a different kind of muzak. That was a crunch moment for me."

"Terry and I got together to write during the making of *More Specials*," continues Golding. "I had been the victim of a violent attack and wanted to write about my experiences. I just couldn't understand why somebody wanted to try to take someone else's life because of the colour of their skin. So I wrote the song *Why?*"

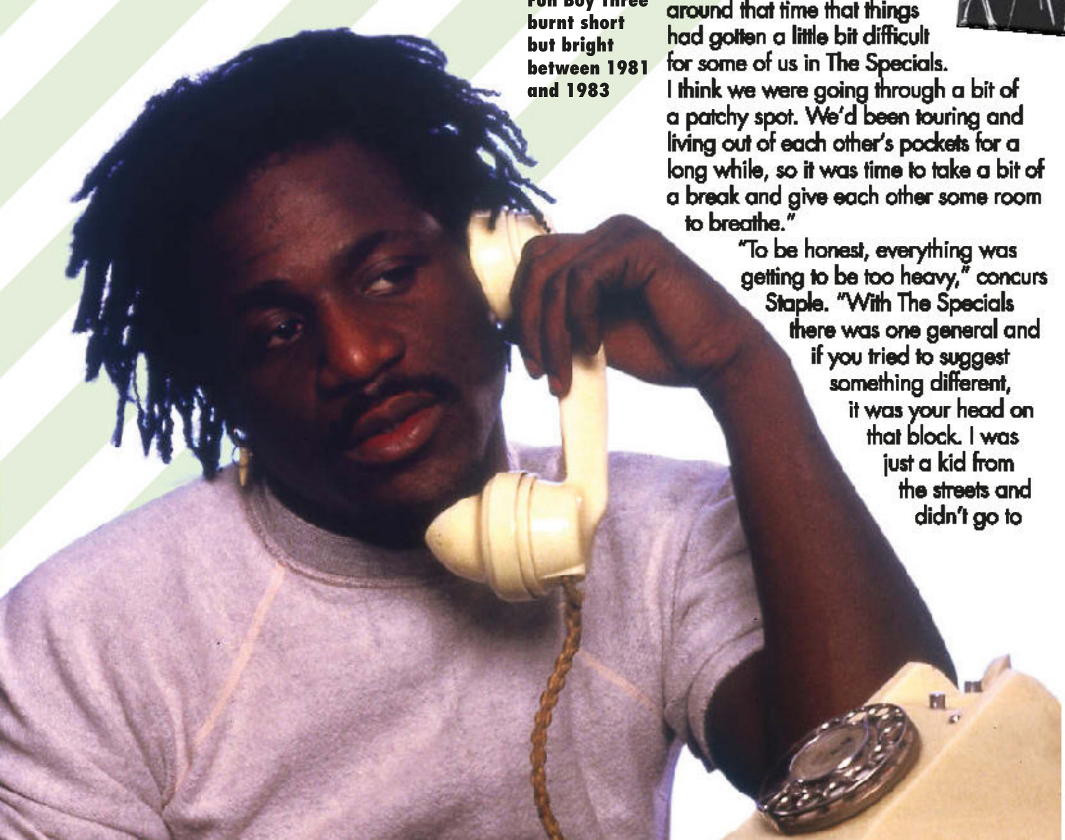
Golding's track would appear on the *Ghost Town* single alongside Hall's *Friday Night, Saturday Morning*. Arguably the singer's most significant lyrical contribution to The Specials, his sombre working-class wit shines on what Hall would describe as, "a mundane song about a mundane lifestyle".

"I believe I'm blessed to have worked with both the best lyricist in the world in Terry and with one of the very best arrangers in Jerry," considers Golding. "It's a real pity it didn't work out with The Specials because they had such amazing creative visions.

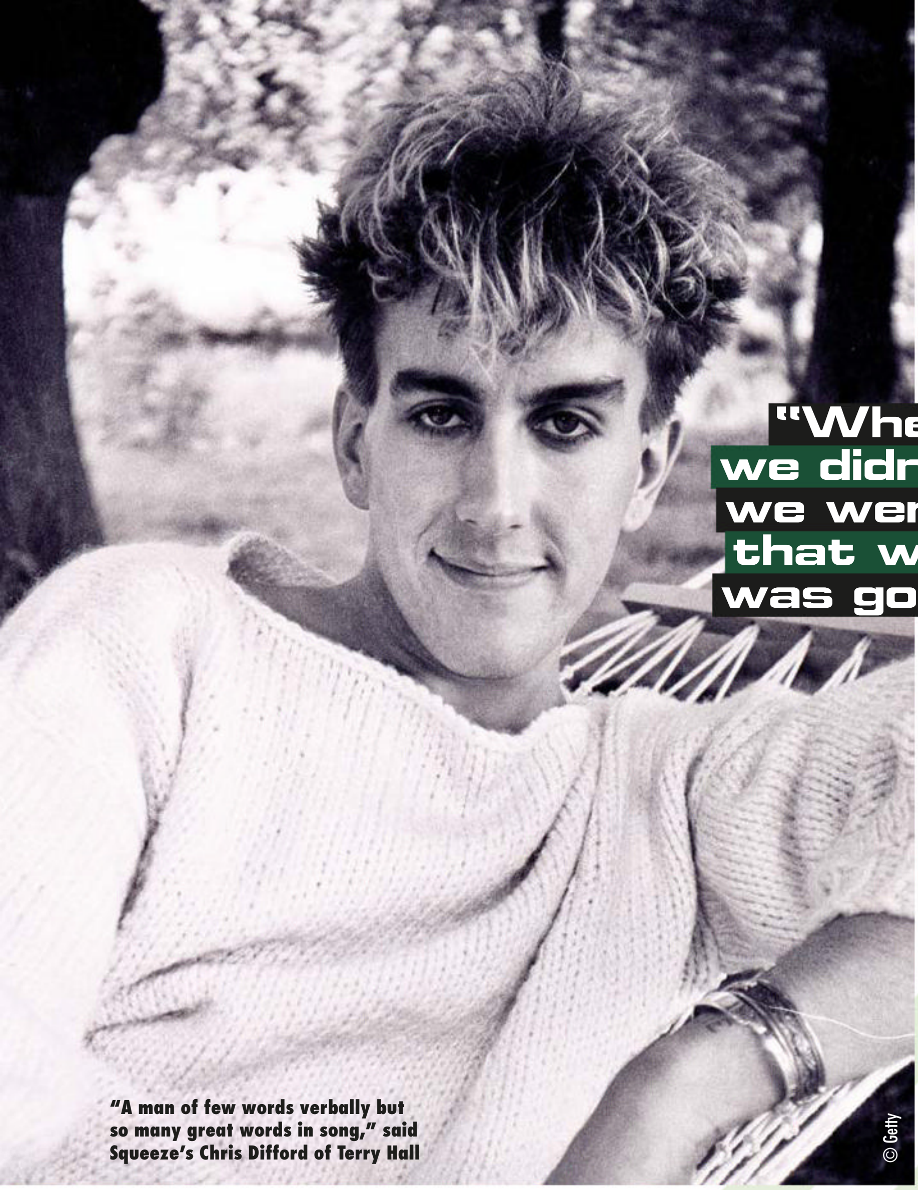
"On those tracks you can hear the direction we thought the band should be heading. After making *Ghost Town*, Terry and I reconvened in the studio with ideas for the next Specials album and recorded a few demos. We were convinced the natural follow-up to *Ghost Town* should've been one song we'd written called *The Lunatics (Have Taken Over The Asylum)*. For me, it was a no-brainer because it was written when Reagan and Thatcher were leading the world through dark times. When Terry, Horace [bassist Horace Panter] and I recorded The Specials' 2019 album *Encore*, we thought it was necessary to go back and revisit the track as we headed through another unsettling political period. It felt like the lunatics had once again taken over the asylum with Trump in the White House and Brexit/Boris intent on turning people against each other in the UK."

Rhoda Dakar, vocalist of 2 Tone outfit The Bodysnatchers, tells *Classic Pop*: "Terry played me a demo cassette of *Lunatics* in the airport on a Walkman before I went out with The Specials to America in 1981. I sat there in the terminal and thought to myself, 'Wow! this is brilliant... so, Terry is actually a great songwriter as well'. I thought the song was quite remarkable."

"At that time Terry and I were getting impatient," acknowledges Golding. "We couldn't wait for Jerry to press the



The Telephone Always Rings: Fun Boy Three burnt short but bright between 1981 and 1983



"A man of few words verbally but so many great words in song," said Squeeze's Chris Difford of Terry Hall

© Getty

THE LEGACY OF A RESTLESS CREATIVE URGE

> "When we left the band, we didn't know which road we were going to take. All that we knew was that it was going to be different."
>
> NEVILLE STAPLE

go-ahead button for us to advance with *Lunatics*, so it was then when ideas for a separate group started to develop for me."

WE'RE HAVING ALL THE FUN

Backstage at *Top Of The Pops*, where The Specials were recording a performance of *Ghost Town*, Hall, Staple and Golding announced to the rest of the band that they were breaking away. "When you're mentally tired, you don't really think, you just kind of react," admits Golding. "Possibly we could have gone on with The Specials and become mega wealthy like U2, but would that make us happier? No, I don't think so."

"Terry, Lynval and I left The Specials because it felt like we had no input and, if we did, it didn't feel like we were being recognised for it anyway," says Staple. "When we left the band, we didn't know which road we were going to take. All we knew was that it was going to be different. While Terry was seen as the 'main one', it wasn't like the Jerry thing. Everybody, all three of us, had a freedom to do whatever we wanted, everything was equal. We'd just throw ideas around and we were the ones [sings] 'having all the fun!'"

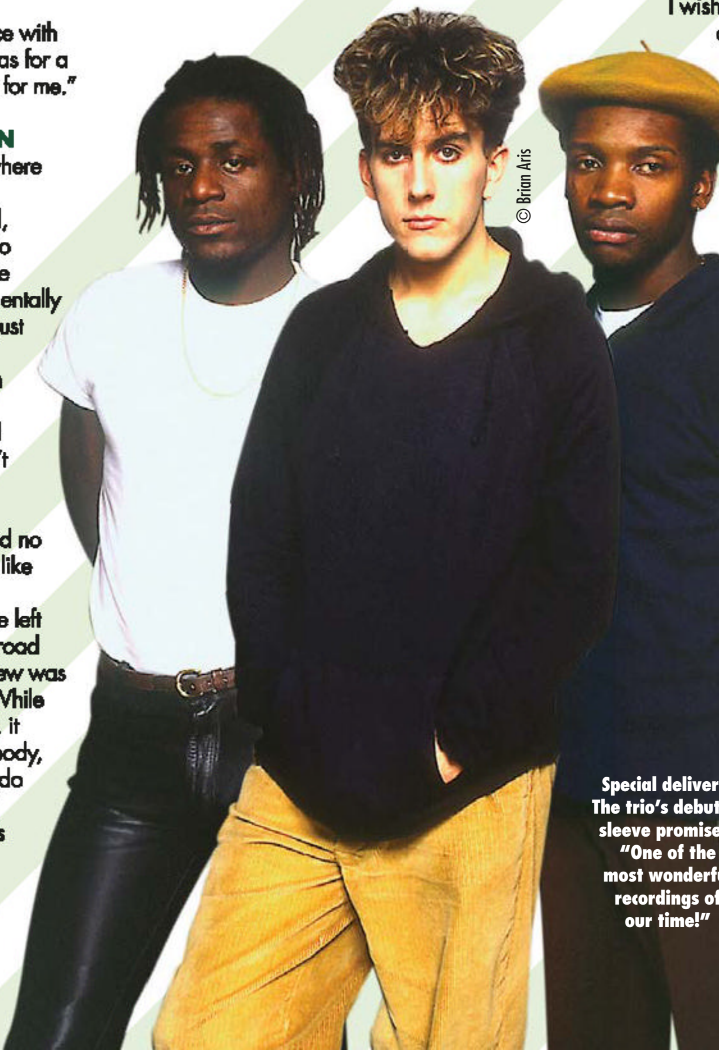
Golding says: "As we were the three front guys in The Specials, it was very easy to separate ourselves off from the group. For us, the freedom to experiment was a lot greater within Fun Boy Three and we could all try different ideas and progress as musicians. Being a creative artist, you have to keep moving."

"Musically, it was totally different from The Specials," adds Staple. "I wouldn't necessarily call it pop, but I would say it was a new type of music. For the first record there was no 'band', we'd just asked for percussionists to come in and join us in the studio.

"I was able to learn to play the trumpet when I was in Fun Boy Three. You'd have time to do stuff like that. I wish I could've learned to do that kind of thing with Rico [Rodriguez] and Dick [Cuthell] while I was in The Specials, but there never was the time."

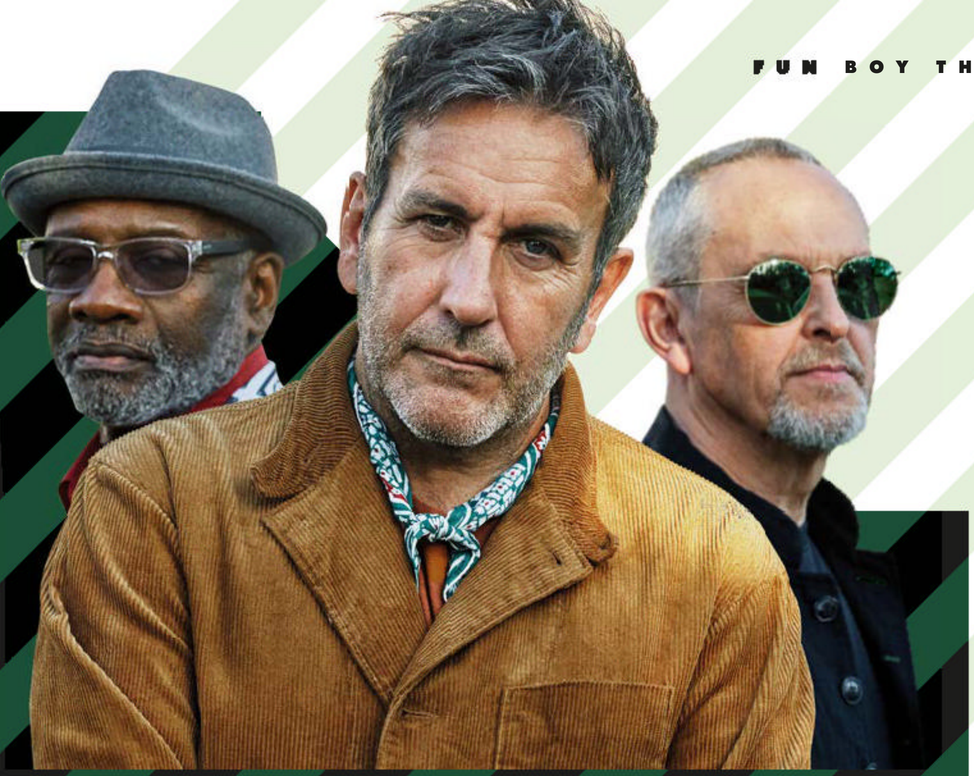
Entering the UK Top 40 at No.37 in November 1981, *The Lunatics (Have Taken Over The Asylum)* would peak at No.20 for three weeks before slipping out of the charts. The reasoning for such a disappointing performance is a mystery, but perhaps Staple's observation offers something of an explanation: "There were a lot of people who turned their noses up at what we were doing at the time, saying, 'Ooh that's not The Specials...' – well, we were not supposed to be The Specials!"

Perhaps Fun Boy Three didn't pack the same immediate punch as The Specials' brand of socio-political ska-punk, however the



© Brian Aris

Special delivery: The trio's debut LP sleeve promised: "One of the most wonderful recordings of our time!"



When Fun Boy Three split, Hall moved to Manchester and formed The Colourfield. Featuring fellow Coventrians Toby Lyons and Karl Shale, formerly of 2 Tone alumni The Swinging Cats, the band released the 1985 studio album *Virgins And Philistines*, which spawned the hit single *Thinking Of You*.

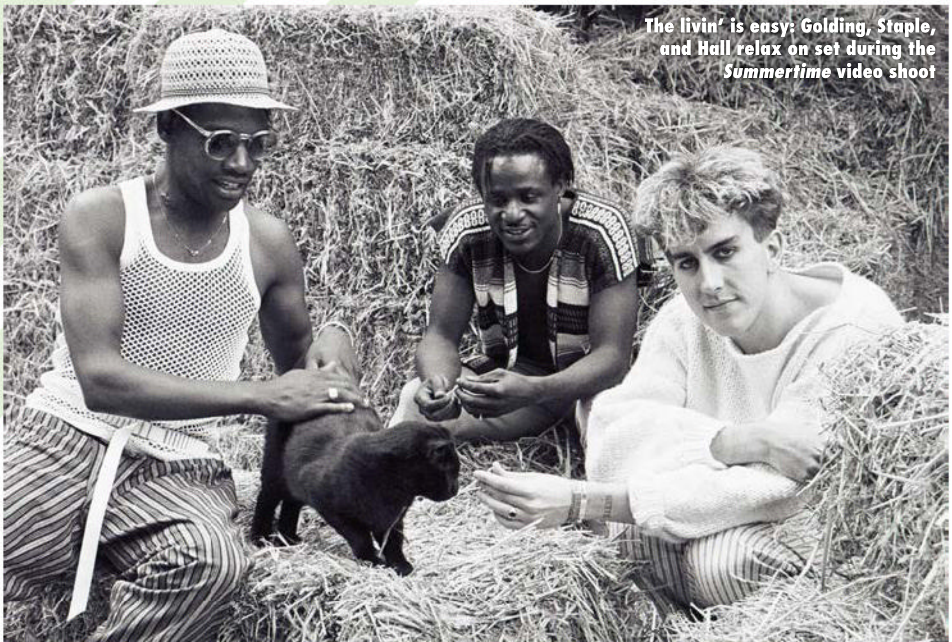
The restless Hall went on to team up with Blair Booth and Anouchka Grose to record under the moniker Terry, Blair & Anouchka in 1989, before forming the electronic pop outfit Vegas with Dave Stewart of the Eurythmics in 1992. Following two solo albums, *Home* (1994) and *Laugh* (1997), Hall would collaborate with a wide range of artists including Tricky, Nouvelle Vague, Gorillaz and Mushtaq.

He reunited with Neville Staple and Lynval Golding in 2009 to tour with a reformed Specials, albeit minus founder Jerry Dammers. Hall would sadly front the band for a final time when the group headlined last August's sold-out Beautiful Days Festival in Devon.

After Fun Boy Three, Staple teamed up with The Beat's Ranking Roger to form Special Beat. On parting ways with the reformed Specials in 2012, Staple has continued to tour relentlessly as the 'Original Rude Boy'. He said: "I've had a minor stroke, but that won't stop me. I have my band and we have so much fun playing shows. Somebody said, 'Neville, are you ever going to retire?' and I say, 'What is retire?' I'll keep going."

Says Golding: "When Fun Boy Three came to an end I worked in the community, funding young bands in Coventry, because I thought it was my duty to help young people."

Golding continued to make music with Pama International and would return to The Specials on their celebrated reformation. Alongside Hall and bassist Horace Panter, he recorded the critically-acclaimed 2019 album *Encore* and had been a constant presence in The Specials until he was sidelined following an accident which would result in extensive surgery on his spine. Talking from Jamaica as he recuperated, Golding tells *Classic Pop*, "I'm feeling a lot better now, but it can be torturous at times. My good friend Steve Cradock recommended a hypnotherapist who has taught me how to control my emotions and remain positive."



The livin' is easy: Golding, Staple, and Hall relax on set during the *Summertime* video shoot

© Getty

hits would soon land. After the Top 20 success of *The Lunatics (Have Taken Over The Asylum)*, the band found themselves in the Top 10 with both *It Ain't What You Do (It's The Way That You Do It)* and *Really Saying Something*, which they recorded with an unknown trio of girls, who'd go on to score the world's highest number of chart entries by an all-female group.

Golding says: "Fun Boy Three were pretty laid-back. We enjoyed success, but we were never as forceful as The Specials. That doesn't mean the songs weren't as lyrically or musically strong, I believe they're just as important and played a big part during that period.

"Terry and I shared everything when we were creating, I just had to come up with an idea or a title of a song and he'd come back with all of the lyrics... like a mind reader he could get into my head and say everything I was thinking.

"Another example of his inventive foresight was the decision to work with Bananarama. Terry spotted those three girls and said, 'We're going to release a pop record with them'. He then plucks this old jazz song out from nowhere, [sings] *It Ain't What You Do, It's The Way That You Do It*, and the next thing you know it's a hit. I must give Terry the credit for having that vision."

Formed as a trio in 1980 by friends Sara Dallin, Siobhan Fahey and Keren Woodward, Bananarama caught the attention of Hall after they appeared in *The Face* magazine. *It Ain't What You Do...* proved the perfect launchpad for the 'Nanas in 1982 and helped secure Fun Boy Three a No.4 hit. Reacting to Hall's death, Bananarama posted online: "We are so saddened to hear of Terry's passing. It was a phone call from him that changed our lives. It was a pleasure and a privilege to have known him. We will treasure the memories of the time we spent with this beautiful, talented and funny gentleman."

Looking back at the time he spent with Bananarama, Staple recalls: "It was great, I really enjoyed hanging out with the girls. I remember they didn't know too much about working in the studio at the time and seemed to be a bit nervous. So we kind of helped ease them through it all."

"It was such a joyous and creative time," adds Golding. "I think all three of them are wonderful. But I tell you this, man those girls could drink! They drank us under the table!"

ONCE IN A LIFETIME

Released in March 1982, Fun Boy Three's eponymous debut was produced by the band with Dave Jordan who they knew from working alongside Dammers on the *More Specials* LP. *Fun Boy Three* spent three weeks in the UK Top 10 and would peak at No.7. Within a year, the group had recorded and released their follow-up album, the David Byrne-produced *Waiting*, which had a pop-oriented feel and more polished finish.

SARDONIC SLICES OF SELF-BELIEF

Golding says: "That first Specials album, which we made in 1979, was a 'band' record where everyone contributed. Elvis Costello, operating the production, certainly lifted the process for us all. With Elvis there was lots of alcohol in the studio, and we'd often get very drunk... it was very much a white wine and beer album.

"On *The Fun Boy Three*, we had a different kind of creative fun in the studio experimenting and exploring sounds. Bringing in another 'name' like David Byrne to produce *Waiting* was inspiring, and his absolute genius tapped into something within us.

"You work with some producers and they come in with these huge egos, but David just let us perform. He's a very quiet man, and would sit in his chair, listen to what we were doing, wait until we'd finish before gently suggesting we tried it a different way. He was so cool, calm and accommodating, a wonderful man to work with."

Staple agrees: "I remember thinking, 'Woah, we're going to be working with David Byrne from Talking Heads!' He was a lovely, down-to-earth guy, and his influence brought with it a chilled vibe, which certainly aided the creative process. He also brought with him musicians, and both a musicianship and ability to capture all the ideas we wanted to express. His input was invaluable."

Although *Waiting*, released in February 1983, didn't enjoy the same chart success as the trio's debut, it was still critically well received – notably by the US press. Robert Palmer of *The New York Times* celebrated the LP's "barbed political and social commentary", while David Fricke of *Rolling Stone* praised Byrne's "artful production".

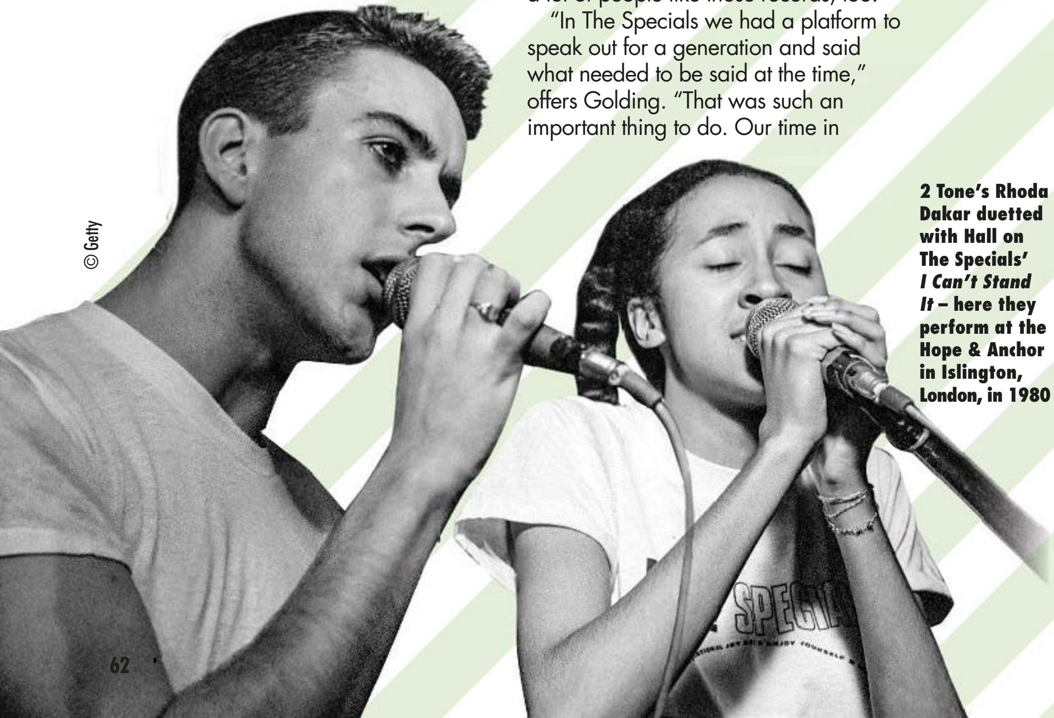
Spawning two UK Top 10 singles, *The Tunnel Of Love* (No.10) and *Our Lips Are Sealed* (No.7), things seemingly ended abruptly for Fun Boy Three when, after two albums, the collective dissolved. "I didn't know it was going to end," states Staple. "I was in Jamaica on holiday when I received a telephone call from England saying, 'I didn't know that Fun Boy Three had split up'... and all I could say in response was, 'Have we? 'I honestly had no idea, there was no discussion, it just happened.

Going Home: Fun Boy Three split after a 1983 tour

© Brian Aris

"We could have carried on and done one more record. It's such a shame we chucked it all down the drain. I really love the Fun Boy Three stuff and I know a lot of people like those records, too."

"In The Specials we had a platform to speak out for a generation and said what needed to be said at the time," offers Golding. "That was such an important thing to do. Our time in Fun Boy Three was always much calmer and there was never any worry of it burning out like The Specials. However, it was the right time to have a break, sit back, and look at the journey we'd all been on. Terry wanted to explore other things and I think, if you're an artist, you shouldn't hold another artist back... they need to have that freedom to be creative. I do hope that one day he gets the recognition his talents deserve."



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2 Tone's Rhoda Dakar duetted with Hall on The Specials' *I Can't Stand It* – here they perform at the Hope & Anchor in Islington, London, in 1980

LOVE LOVE LOVE

When The Specials stated that Hall "encapsulated the very essence of life… the joy, the pain, the humour, the fight for justice, but mostly the love", that sentiment reverberated around the music world.

Horace Panter revealed in a moving post how The Specials had planned to record a reggae album in L.A. towards the end of 2022 before Hall was taken ill. He went on to state: "The world has lost a unique voice and I have lost a good friend."

Jerry Dammers wrote: "Terry's death is very shocking, horrible, and tragic news. Beyond our punky start on stage, it was in the studio with Elvis Costello producing, where Terry was able to sing quietly, that I think his hidden strength came out, a delivery which brought out

"Like so many people right now, I'm in that land of disbelief," Pete Chambers (pictured), Curator Director at The Coventry Music Museum, tells *Classic Pop*. "It's a land where one of the country's finest frontmen is no more. Terry Hall was unique in his voice, and he commanded the stage like no other. No fancy moves from this Cov kid, just a sardonic slice of self-belief. A self-belief that was often eclipsed by his own demons.

"On the day he passed it struck me that we would never get the chance to hear him sing the likes of *Friday Night, Saturday Morning* or *Our Lips Are Sealed* again, and we'd never hear the next masterpiece from the man who gave us *The Life And Times (Of A Man Called Depression)*.

"Since his passing the grief from music fans has been palpable, leaving a great big Terry Hall-shaped hole in the musical timeline. Sad as it all is, at least we have the music, the songs and that voice, a voice that will forever tell us that he's going to enjoy himself first… bye bye Terry."

The Coventry Music Museum, located in The 2 Tone Village on Coventry's Walsgrave Road, has opened a book of condolence for fans to pay their respects to the much-loved singer. Visit covmm.co.uk for more information.

Fun Boy Three perform on *The Tube* TV show in June 1983

© Shutterstock

the melancholy in some of The Specials' songs, and which I think a lot of people could relate to."

Costello himself added: "Terry's voice was the perfect instrument for the true and necessary songs on *The Specials*. That honesty is heard in so many of his songs in joy and sorrow."

Rhoda Dakar, who duetted with Hall on The Specials' *I Can't Stand It* and *Pearl's Café*, tells *Classic Pop*: "In The Specials, he brought an anger. It wasn't explosive, as it was with some of the other guys, it was more held down. The anger came out in the delivery, in his body language, and through those eyes... he could throw daggers with a look when the audience was being yobbish or sieg heiling. He was very good at standing up to them and was always in control.

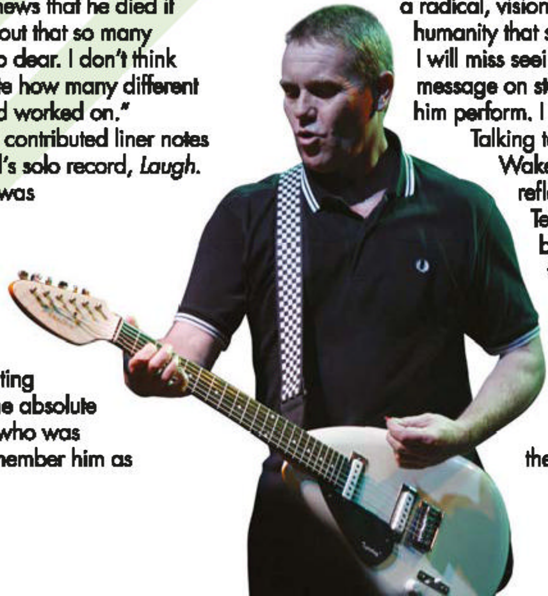
"Because he was softly spoken it was even more cutting, people had to shut up to hear him, and then he would cut them off at the knees.

"Following the news that he died it was lovely to find out that so many people held him so dear. I don't think I fully grasped quite how many different collaborations he'd worked on."

In 2009, Dakar contributed liner notes to a reissue of Hall's solo record, *Laugh*. "I thought the title was apt because Terry was a funny person," she said. "Not funny peculiar, but funny ha-ha. I was always shouting and gregarious, the absolute antithesis of Terry who was reserved. I will remember him as somebody who'd do or say stuff for his own amusement, and it didn't really matter if anybody was listening or not. He lived his life to amuse himself, not for other people. He loved to take the piss and when I took the piss back, he took it. People who can laugh at themselves with you, are good people as far as I'm concerned."

"There was something really riveting about Terry's style, and I think that his delivery was a huge part of 2 Tone"

DAVE WAKELING



The Beat's Dave Wakeling

2 Tone labelmate and vocalist for The Selecter, Pauline Black, wrote in an eloquent tribute in *The Guardian*: "Terry was always special – the man with the golden voice. We will remember his prodigious vocals and songwriting talents, but also his unique place in a radical, visionary movement for humanity that still resonates today... I will miss seeing Terry live that message on stage. I will miss seeing him perform. I will miss him, full stop."

Talking to *Classic Pop*, Dave Wakeling of The Beat, reflects: "I was taken by Terry right from the beginning. When we first started doing shows with The Specials, it was intriguing to me how he could act both completely connected and absolutely bored all in the same moment. There was something really riveting about his style, and I think that his delivery was a huge part of 2 Tone. He could be quite droll and humorous onstage, but offstage was actually very quiet.

"I can be quite sardonic, too, and we had a lot of fun slowly deflating the pretentious situations we often found ourselves in... he really didn't need to use very many words to do it either. I was always impressed by the things that he said in his interviews, it was very straightforward, and he didn't necessarily give the answers that people expected. I'm sure he felt that enormous weight of every interview being like a sociology lesson being lifted when he started Fun Boy Three.

"Terry was a very caring man and he always wanted to know if I was doing alright... except on the football pitch! He was a great footballer, but I'll never forget how the mild-mannered man of pop turned into Norman Hunter and cut right through me during one charity match."

Closing The Specials' official statement, the band said, "Terry often left the stage at the end of The Specials' life-affirming shows with three words... Love Love Love."

Thankfully, that message of peace and unity will resonate forever through all aspects of Hall's music. ■

Frankie Goes To Hollywood – Liverpool

THERE WERE PERSONNEL PROBLEMS, HUGE RECORDING COSTS AND AN ABORTED COVER VERSION OF A MUCH-DERIDED ROD STEWART NO.1 HIT. SO HOW DID FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD'S SECOND AND FINAL ALBUM *LIVERPOOL* EMERGE AS ONE OF THE MOST STRIKING RECORDS OF THE MID-80s?

MATT PHILLIPS

★ ★

It's no exaggeration to say that 1984 belonged to Frankie. Trevor Horn produced the three epochal No.1 singles which took on modern society's Big Themes (sex, war, religion) and the epic indulgence that was their debut album, *Welcome To The Pleasuredome*. But were they post-punk pioneers or the first boyband of the 80s? They set out to prove they were the former when embarking on second and final LP, 1986's *Liverpool.*

ZTT label boss Jill Sinclair and husband Horn believed Frankie could strike it big in the US after *Relax* made the Billboard Top 10 in March 1985 – the words 'Village People' were even bandied about. Instead, on their 1985 US tour, the band often opened their set with Bruce Springsteen's *Born To Run*. In the new Ronald Reagan-anointed United States, this didn't go down too well…

The tour wound down in late spring 1985, but there was increasing hostility between frontman Holly Johnson and The Lads (bassist Mark O'Toole, guitarist Brian 'Nasher' Nash, drummer Peter 'Ped' Gill), with backing vocalist Paul Rutherford in the middle, for reasons both musical and personal.

They all stayed on in Hawaii at the end of the tour and met up in Ireland to start writing their second LP in the summer of 1985. Back in Britain, unemployment was nudging three million – Margaret Thatcher was one of the most divisive Prime Ministers in history so the frivolity and excesses of *Pleasuredome* were definitely out. The new album, according to Gill in *Smash Hits*, would be, "more what we really are – five fellas from Liverpool singing songs about the way they feel about things."

Horn was too busy on Yes' *Big Generator* to produce but Stephen Lipson – key musician and engineer on *Pleasuredome*, as well as producer of Propaganda's *A Secret Wish* – was perfectly placed. Still, Johnson was furious that Horn wouldn't be joining them for their all-important sophomore record. Tensions didn't improve when, according to Horn in his book *Adventures In Modern Recording*, one of the first new tracks he heard was the band's cover of Rod Stewart's *Do Ya Think I'm Sexy* featuring Rutherford on lead vocals. The Lads loved it but Johnson did not, and threatened to leave if it was released as the first single. Horn backed down, though now regrets it.

Repairing to Wisseloord Studios in Hilversum, Holland, with Lipson's dream team in tow – keyboard players Andy Richards and Peter-John Vettese, percussionist Luís Jardim and engineer Heff Moraes – the rhythm section laid down grooves while Johnson worked on melodies and lyrics, with an undercurrent of tension.

Holly also had a new boyfriend/manager/minder – Wolfgang Kuhle – and was "loved up", said Lipson to the 80sography podcast, often disappearing for days. "He used to say to me: 'I need two days' notice if you want me to sing'. He wouldn't be there with everyone. I felt like the enemy. I couldn't understand what I'd done apart from trying to help him. He did kind of ruin my life for a few years..."

There was panic as the album deadline approached as all involved realised they didn't have a classic track along the lines of *Relax* or *Two Tribes* in the bag." Horn was helicoptered in towards the end, as studio costs skyrocketed to an estimated £760,000.

But, somehow, *Liverpool* emerged as a striking, sometimes-thrilling slice of pop-prog. Johnson was singing at full tilt, his melodies

HOLLY JOHNSON WAS FURIOUS THAT TREVOR HORN WOULDN'T BE JOINING THEM FOR THEIR ALL-IMPORTANT SOPHOMORE RECORD

The bleakness of Thatcher's Britain was reflected in the more hard-hitting lyrical approach of the *Liverpool* LP

original and arresting, and The Lads played a blinder. If it's not quite kitchen-sink Frankie, there's a pleasing irony between Johnson's state-of-the-nation lyrics and the sumptuous production. And it's weirdly influential – you'd imagine It Bites, Tears For Fears and Faith No More had a copy in their back pockets.

Warriors Of The Wasteland continued in the tradition of striking ZTT album openers. *Pleasuredome*'s title track saw Holly referencing Samuel Taylor Coleridge, this time it was TS Eliot's *The Wasteland*. Despite O'Toole reckoning that it sounded like Spinal Tap, the song was remixed to create the second single, reaching UK No.19. *Rage Hard* came close to the ABC template of solid grooves and faintly preposterous lyrics – *Q* magazine even posited that Johnson might be parodying Martin Fry. Johnson claimed in *Smash Hits* that his lyric was inspired by Dylan Thomas' poem *Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night*. The album's lead single, released on 25 August 1986, reached No.4 in the UK and spawned a remarkable 12" version narrated by Pamela Stephenson.

Maximum Joy – named after an early-80s post-punk band – is pure bliss, luxuriating in Lipson's infinite guitar, Johnson's gossamer vocals and ZTT fairy dust. *For Heaven's Sake* is a barmy anti-Thatcher ballad ("She should buy us all a drink") in queasy 6/8 time, featuring a melody that wouldn't be out of place in a Broadway musical. The fun *Lunar Bay* – with Stan Boardman voiceover – and

IF IT'S NOT QUITE KITCHEN-SINK FRANKIE, THERE'S A PLEASING IRONY BETWEEN THE STATE-OF-THE-NATION LYRICS AND SUMPTUOUS PRODUCTION

Watching The Wildlife are almost impossibly smooth with remarkable instrumental clarity, pointing ahead to Lipson's productions for Prefab Sprout, Annie Lennox and Sophie B Hawkins. The latter got to No.28 in the UK as the album's third and final single. *Is There Anybody Out There?* is a fitting end to Frankie's recording career, a majestic ballad with some lovely Johnson vocals and a subtle Richard Niles string arrangement. Adam Sweeting opined in *Q*: "Why on earth didn't somebody give this song to Dusty Springfield?"

Named by ZTT's PR man Paul Morley (Johnson wanted to call it *From Diamond Mine To The Factory*), *Liverpool* was finally released on 20 October 1986. It was not a commercial disaster, reaching No.5 in the UK and the Top 10 in many other European countries, but only made a disappointing No.88 in the US. It also had a great cover featuring the photography of Anton Corbijn. In *Smash Hits*, Gill described the LP as 'ten times better' than *Pleasuredome*. *Q* agreed: "An absolutely unimpeachable mainstream rock record." The *NME* were outraged.

Frankie set off on tour in late 1986 and stayed on the road until Johnson officially left the band in summer '87. ZTT then tried to negotiate a solo contract with him but Kuhle allegedly put a spanner in the works, claiming the company couldn't afford Holly unless they sold their SARM West studio, a comment which led to a court case (Horn claims that he wanted both Frankie and Johnson on ZTT as separate entities). Meanwhile, as litigation continued, Johnson started his solo career with MCA, while Rutherford and The Lads went back to Liverpool. They were also still paying back studio costs until the first greatest hits compilation came out in 1992.

In 2023, we still await an official reunion, as Johnson and Nash didn't play with Rutherford, O'Toole and Gill at Horn's career-surveying charity Wembley Arena gig in 2004. But never say never – everyone loves a happy ending...

TOP 20 PRE-STARDOM TRACKS

DELVING DEEP INTO THE PAST LIVES OF OUR FAVOURITE STARS, WE UNCOVER 20 FASCINATING CURIOS BEFORE THEY BURST FULLY ONTO THE WORLD STAGE

BARRY PAGE

We all have to start somewhere, and many of the most successful and acclaimed musicians of the 80s and 90s completed a musical apprenticeship of sorts in different bands, gaining invaluable songwriting and gigging experience prior to them hitting the commercial heights in their respective careers – some briefly tasted fame, while others were somewhat less successful. Interestingly, many acts returned to their humble beginnings, reworking old material that hadn't reached its full potential previously. What we're left with is a fascinating trail of rarities and curiosities.

20

JOHNNY & THE SELF ABUSERS
DEAD VANDALS (1977)

Formed on a whim during the punk rock explosion of 1977, this short-lived band attracted a sizeable crowd at their debut show in Glasgow, and later supported Generation X. They cut a single, *Saints And Sinners*, for Chiswick Records, but had already started to fracture by the time of its release. John Milarky and Allan McNeill left to form Cuban Heels, while the remaining members – who included childhood friends Jim Kerr and Charlie Burchill – renamed themselves Simple Minds. During early shows they continued to play the record's more accessible B-side, *Dead Vandals*.

19

ART NOUVEAU
ANIMAL INSTINCTS (1981)

Experimental Leighton Buzzard-based quartet Art Nouveau, who were described by frontman Nick Beggs as a cross between Devo and Talking Heads, released self-financed single *Fear Machine* in 1981, but its lowly impact led to something of a career rethink. After advertising for a new singer, they struck gold with Limahl, who was instrumental in securing a record deal for the newly-named Kajagoogoo. Later, they cut a new version of *Fear Machine* B-side *Animal Instincts* and included it on the flip of *Ooh To Be Ah*, the follow-up to the chart-topping *Too Shy*.

18

THE TOUCH
INTERNATIONAL LADY (1984)

Sananda Maitreya, the artist formerly known as Terence Trent D'Arby, gained invaluable experience fronting jazz-funk act The Touch whilst in the US army in Germany, where he was eventually discharged after going AWOL. The band were popular live, but 1984's mini-album *Love On Time* met with little success. To Maitreya's consternation, Boney M mastermind Frank Farian – who owned the recordings – later capitalised on his solo success by releasing standout track *International Lady* in 1989, followed by a poorly-packaged compilation, *Early Works*.

17

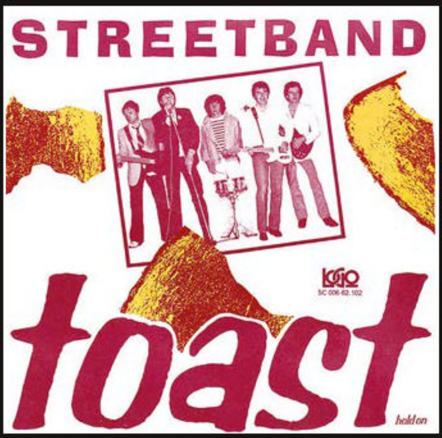
VICE VERSA
RIOT SQUAD (1979)

Formed by Stephen Singleton and Mark White, Vice Versa were part of a thriving Sheffield electronic scene that included Cabaret Voltaire and The Human League. *Riot Squad* was arguably the standout on *Music 4*, the self-financed debut EP which attracted favourable comparisons with the likes of The Normal and Throbbing Gristle. Later, after an interview with fanzine editor Martin Fry, a sonic metamorphosis was set in motion. Initially hired as a keyboardist, Fry soon became the singer, and later the gold-suited focal point of their renamed band, ABC.

16

GYLLENE TIDER
BREAK ANOTHER HEART (1984)

Fronted by Per Gessle, Swedish power-pop act Gyllene Tider ('Golden Age') released their only English-language LP, *The Heartland Café*, in 1984. *Break Another Heart* was one of the tracks to feature Marie Fredriksson's vocal talents, making it something of a prototype Roxette recording. In fact, it was the Roxette moniker – taken from Dr. Feelgood's debut single – that the band adopted in the US, since their label insisted on a less indigenous name. They split up a year later, leaving Gessle and Fredriksson to begin their long-standing creative partnership.



15

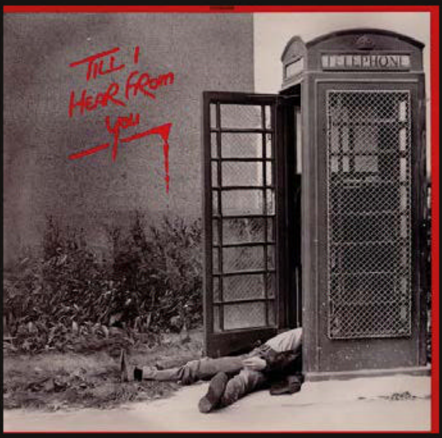
STREETBAND
TOAST (1978)

Having fortuitously acquired some free recording, Streetband cut this humorous ode to the breakfast staple, which included improvised lyrics and a Cockney delivery from floppy-haired singer Paul Young. Originally consigned to the flipside of their debut single, *Hold On*, it was promoted to A-side status when DJ Kenny Everett began playing it on the radio. The one-hit wonders later morphed into blue-eyed soul act Q-Tips, who released a self-titled album in 1980 that mixed covers with originals, a template Young would also adopt during his solo career.

14

SPLIT ENZ
I WALK AWAY (1984)

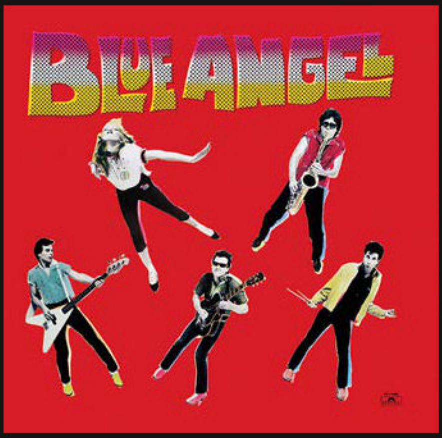
Following Tim Finn's exit from Split Enz – best remembered in the UK for new wave classic *I Got You* – younger sibling Neil became the Antipodean art rock outfit's de facto frontman. A new line-up, which included drummer Paul Hester, subsequently released the patchy *See Ya 'Round* album, although it included one bona fide classic in lead single *I Walk Away*. Following a farewell tour, Neil and Paul regrouped to form Crowded House, and re-recorded the track for their debut album, although it didn't quite recapture the magic of the original.



13

FUSION
LOOK BEHIND YOU (1980)

Civil servant Nik Kershaw was performing in a covers band named Hogg in an Ipswich pub when opportunity came knocking in the form of bassist Kenn Elson, who invited him to join a professional jazz-funk outfit led by esteemed keyboardist Reg Webb. As Fusion, they cut one album, *Till I Hear From You*, which included three of Kershaw's own songs; one of which was the Stevie Wonder-esque *Look Behind You*. It was later repurposed as the title track of debut solo album *Human Racing*, this time featuring a decidedly more assured lead vocal.



12

BLUE ANGEL
MAYBE HE'LL KNOW (1980)

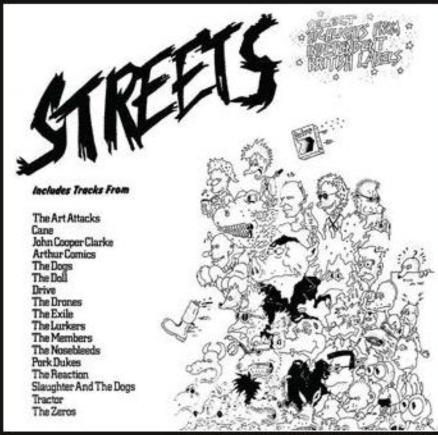
By the time Cyndi Lauper had joined retro-pop quintet Blue Angel in 1978, the Brooklyn-born singer was already an experienced performer, having cut her teeth in a number of covers bands. They released a self-titled album in 1980, but, despite some favourable reviews and modest European success, the band dissolved, paving the way for Lauper to launch a successful solo career. She never forgot her roots, though, and cut a new version of standout track *Maybe He'll Know* for the *True Colors* LP, and even drafted in doo-wop fan Billy Joel to harmonise.

11
RICH KIDS
MARCHING MEN (1978)

Following his enforced exit from the Sex Pistols, Glen Matlock formed short-lived power-pop act Rich Kids, and its line-up included former bugglegum popstar Midge Ure and drummer Rusty Egan, who'd later pair off to form Visage. In terms of the songwriting, it was Matlock who did much of the heavy lifting on their only album, the Mick Ronson-produced *Ghosts Of Princes In Towers*, but the future Ultravox frontman also made an impression with the anti-fascist synth-infused second single *Marching Men*, which he would later describe as his first "real" song.

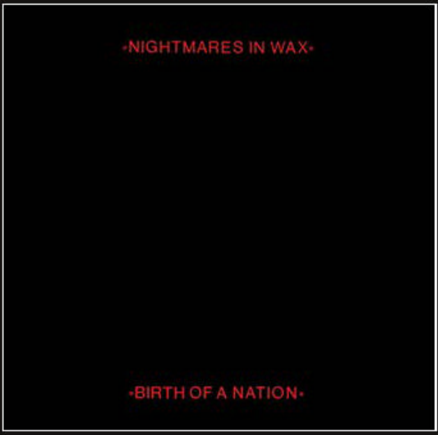
10
GEN X
DANCING WITH MYSELF (1980)

Built around the creative nucleus of singer Billy Idol and future Sigue Sigue Sputnik founder Tony James, punk act Generation X scored a number of minor hits, before imploding during the making of their third album. A line-up change resulted in a rebrand as Gen X as well as a new direction, as Idol sought a more commercial sound. Produced by Giorgio Moroder collaborator Keith Forsey, breakthrough track *Dancing With Myself* flopped under the Gen X name, but a remix, along with an impeccably-timed MTV-friendly video, kick-started Idol's solo career.



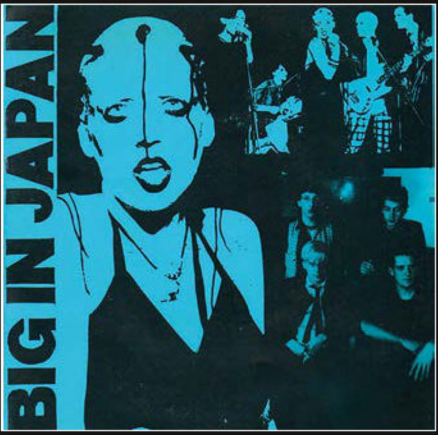
09
THE REACTION
TALK TALK TALK TALK (1977)

Along with influential older brother Ed, who was then managing Eddie And The Hot Rods, fledgling musician Mark Hollis penned this early version of Talk Talk's titular hit for the short-lived punk band, The Reaction, and it was subsequently included on an acclaimed Beggars Banquet compilation titled *Streets*. A fascinating period piece, its pace is noticeably frenetic, while the lyrics have more of a political bent ("Well, politicians, they keep talking in rhymes/ Twist their grin and make you think they're straight down the line") than the angsty Talk Talk version.



08
NIGHTMARES IN WAX
BLACK LEATHER (1980)

Pete Burns was renowned both for an acerbic wit and propensity to shock, and his dark humour first manifested itself on the *Birth of A Nation* EP, which was released by the now-legendary Inevitable Records label. Lead track *Black Leather* – whose homoerotic lyrics about leather-clad bikers left very little to the imagination – established a template for Dead Or Alive's successful goth-disco sound, and even segued into a version of KC And The Sunshine Band's *That's The Way (I like It)*, which later became a hit in its own right for the 80s favourites.



07
BIG IN JAPAN
SUICIDE A GO GO (1978)

A band remembered more for their personnel than their output, Big In Japan's revolving-door membership included Ian Broudie, Budgie and Bill Drummond, although their biggest star-in-waiting was arguably bassist Holly Johnson. The standout on their *From Y To Z And Never Again* EP, *Suicide A Go Go*, took initial inspiration from surrealist writer William S. Burroughs, but was ultimately dedicated to the 'ladies in Falkner Square', where prostitution was once rife. "This skull-cropped Liverpool loony could be a name to watch," *Sounds* later remarked.

06
CARE
FLAMING SWORD (1983)

Following Big In Japan's split, future Lightning Seeds supremo Ian Broudie formed Original Mirrors with former Deaf School vocalist Steve Allen, and also made a name for himself as a producer for various Liverpudlian luminaries. Later, he teamed up with ex-Wild Swans frontman Paul Simpson, and they almost scored a hit with this single, later re-recorded for a Lightning Seeds B-side. Sadly, they split before finishing their album, although a number of tracks were collected on 1997's unauthorised compilation, *Diamonds And Emeralds*.

05

THE TOURISTS
THE LONELIEST MAN IN THE WORLD (1979)

Prior to the formation of Eurythmics, Annie Lennox and Dave Stewart were members of The Tourists, who first grazed the Top 40 with this desperately sad tale of a recluse. There were further hits, including a cover of *I Only Want To Be With You*, but main songwriter Peet Coombes' escalating drug problem hastened the band's demise. Lennox and Stewart soon hooked up with Krautrock legend and former Tourists producer Conny Plank to helm their experimental debut album, *In The Garden*. Its impact was minimal, but global success was just around the corner.

04

THE FRANTIC ELEVATORS
HOLDING BACK THE YEARS (1982)

Fronted by flame-haired singer Mick Hucknall, The Frantic Elevators were one of a number of bands to emerge in the wake of the Sex Pistols' now-legendary show at Manchester's Lesser Free Trade Hall in June 1976. A string of independently-released singles followed, including an early version of *Holding Back The Years* which Hucknall had penned in his late teens. Following the formation of soul-pop act Simply Red, the track was repurposed as a tear-jerking ballad – replete with a new refrain of "I'll keep holding on" – and became a huge transatlantic hit.

03

GRADUATE
EVER MET A DAY (1980)

Prior to international success in Tears For Fears, Roland Orzabal and Curt Smith served their apprenticeship in the sharp-suited Graduate. The band were unlucky not to score a hit with this single, which included a catchy refrain from flautist Steve Buck. Despite a profile-boosting slot on a Judie Tzuke tour, success eluded Graduate, who were unfairly pigeonholed as ska revivalists on account of their parodying single, *Elvis Should Play Ska*. They split after one LP, although drummer Andy Marsden's services were retained for TFF's debut single, *Suffer The Children*.

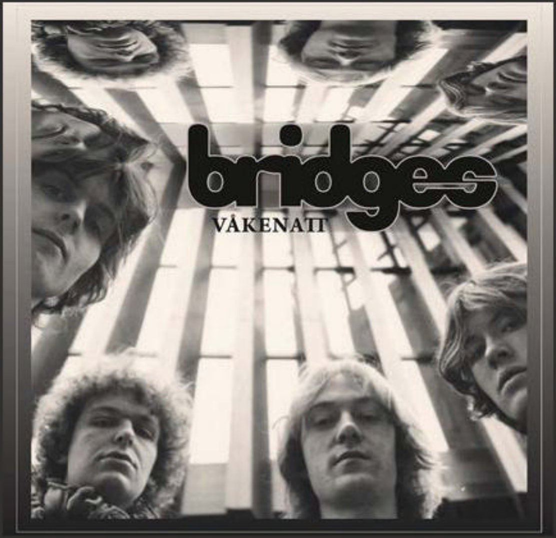
02

THE ID
JULIA'S SONG (1979)

Originally an eight-piece band that included future OMD members Andy McCluskey, Paul Humphreys and Malcolm Holmes, The Id formed in 1977 and soon gained popularity on the Merseyside circuit. Amongst their repertoire was future OMD fan favourite *Julia's Song*, which included lyrics by co-vocalist Julia Kneale, then McCluskey's girlfriend. Before they split, a slimmed-down version of The Id (sans Kneale) recorded *Julia's Song* again (included on 1979 compilation LP, *Street To Street – A Liverpool Album*), plus early takes of *Electricity* and *The Misunderstanding*.

01

BRIDGES
THE LEAP (1981)



Norway's music industry was once viewed as something of a joke, a fact compounded in 1978 when Jahn Teigen became the first act to score 'nul points' at the Eurovision Song Contest. Two musicians who were determined to make it on the international stage were Pål Waaktaar and Magne Furuholmen, one half of an Oslo-based band named Bridges, and later the creative hub of the Billboard-conquering a-ha. In 1980, the fast-evolving quartet released the self-financed and heavily Doors-inspired *Fakkeltog* album, before they changed their name to Poem and worked on the follow-up, *Våkenatt*, which displayed more of a post-punk influence. Their progress was impeded when the studio tapes were stolen, but they soldiered on and worked on an embryonic version of *Take On Me* titled *Miss Eerie* – whose catchy riff would later pique Morten Harket's interest – before eventually splitting up. The *Våkenatt* recordings eventually surfaced in 2018, and one of its most recognisable tracks was *The Leap*, which had evolved into the title track of a-ha's *Scoundrel Days* album. Built around a guitar riff of Furuholmen's, it offers a tantalising glimpse of a band who had once been musically turned on by the likes of Joy Division and Echo And The Bunnymen, years before a-ha were reluctantly marketed as teen pin-ups.

POPSCENE! YOUR AT-A-GLANCE GUIDE TO SOME OF OUR FAVOURITE SUB-GENRES

GOTH

DELVING INTO THE DARKNESS, IT'S TIME TO EMBRACE A LITTLE NIHILISM

STEVE O'BRIEN

© Getty

What is it?

Few musical genres are as fuzzily defined as goth. If you're a modern day self-declared goth, into the savage industrial rhythms of Nine Inch Nails or Marilyn Manson, then you'll probably find little to embrace in the dark, romantic stylings of All About Eve or Dead Can't Dance. Are there many Cure fans in love with deathrock, that more extreme form of goth that includes Christian Death and The Phantom Limbs? And surely there aren't many Siouxsie And The Banshees aficionados who'd dive into the mosh-pit at an Evanescence gig.

So, for this Popscene, we're sticking to British artists and the 80s. Even within those parameters it's a very broad church, ranging from the claustrophobic doom-rock of Joy Division to the pomp and ceremony of The Cult. But what unifies all these bands? Sonically, goth can be identified by minor chords and dramatic and/or melancholic melodies and lyrically, well, let's just say there aren't many bangers about beach parties or happy-ever-after love affairs.

Course, though the story of UK goth starts in the late 70s and early 80s, its origins stretch back much further. It was critic John Stickney who first coined the term "gothic rock" to describe the music of The Doors in October 1967 and there are slithers of goth in everything from The Velvet Underground to Iggy Pop and Berlin-era Bowie.

The post-punk UK incarnation of goth, however, centred around the Batcave club. Opening in 1982, it was to goth what The Blitz was to New Romantic, and boasted such names as Nick Cave, Robert Smith, Siouxsie Sioux, Steve Severin and Pete Murphy among its eyeliner-fixated patrons.

By the mid-80s it had gone mainstream with bands such as The Cult, Bauhaus, The Sisters Of Mercy and The Mission regular fixtures on Radio 1 and *Top Of The Pops*, while even fashion houses were copying the black-dyed, crimped hair and fishnet tops that were the uniform of every committed goth.

Though its heyday was the 80s, that original strain of goth is still with us, in the music of The Horrors, Strange Bones, Creux Lies and La Scaltra, among others. And age hasn't withered those first wavers either, with Robert Smith still admirably loyal to a look he originated in 1978 and Siouxsie Sioux set to headline this year's Latitude Festival. It may be music obsessed with death, but in reality, it seems goth is a genre that refuses to die.

essential singles

BAUHAUS
BELA LUGOSI'S DEAD (1979)

JOY DIVISION
ATMOSPHERE (1980)

THE CULT
SHE SELLS SANCTUARY (1985)

THE MISSION
WASTELAND (1987)

THE SISTERS OF MERCY
DOMINION (1988)

© Getty

Essential Albums

SIOUXSIE AND THE BANSHEES
JUJU (1981)
Possibly the Banshees' finest album, if only for John McGeoch's innovative guitar work, 1981's *Juju* contains two of the band's landmark singles, the darkly melodramatic *Spellbound* and shimmering *Arabian Knights*.

BAUHAUS
IN THE FLAT FIELD (1980)
One of the first records from UK goth's initial wave, *In The Flat Field* gave T-Rex-style glam a morbid makeover. Marc Bolan never sang about despair and desolation like Peter Murphy does on this scuzzy goth classic, which suffered terrible reviews at the time of its release. Proof, if ever was needed, that Bauhaus were ahead of the game in 1980.

ALIEN SEX FIEND
WHO'S BEEN SLEEPING IN MY BRAIN (1983)
Darlings of the Batcave scene, Alien Sex Fiend were always on the more theatrical side of goth, as much Alice Cooper as Robert Smith, but their debut album is a keeper. Produced by Killing Joke's Youth, its standout song remains the gloriously anthemic *Ignore The Machine*, though we also have a lot of time for the eerie rumble of *I'm Her Frankenstein*.

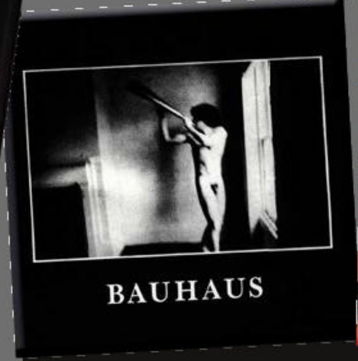
THE SISTERS OF MERCY
FIRST AND LAST AND ALWAYS (1985)
There's not much goth music that you can dance to, but The Sisters Of Mercy always had a bit of rhythm to them, much of which is on this debut long-player from 1985. Saying that, Andrew Eldritch's menacing, graveyard vocals still have the power to chill.

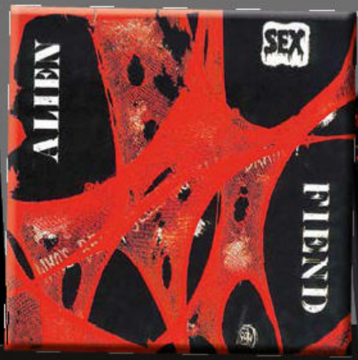
Essential Artists

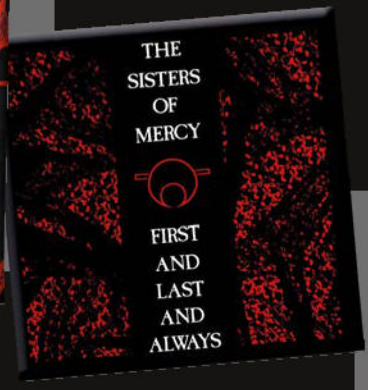
Siouxsie And The Banshees
As part of the so-called 'Bromley Contingent', Siouxsie Sioux was one of punk's most prominent scenesters – she can be spotted preening in the background of the Sex Pistols' legendary Bill Grundy interview – and formed Siouxsie And The Banshees with Steven Severin in 1976. Long-time drummer (and future Mr Sioux) Budgie arrived in 1979 in time to tour second album, *Join Hands*. The band would release 11 LPs in total, before splitting in 1996.

The Cure
Though Robert Smith has long denied that The Cure are, in fact, goth, it's clear to most of us, through their look and music, that they tick most of the genre's boxes. Formed in 1978 and still going strong despite multiple line-up changes, they've released 13 studio albums, though we're still waiting on that long-promised next one. *Songs Of A Lost World* was announced by Smith as coming out prior to the band's European tour last October, but while the concerts went ahead, there's still no sign of it or its companion album with an as yet unrevealed title.

Bauhaus
Formed in 1978 with the name Bauhaus 1919 (in reference to the first operating year of the famed German art school, Bauhaus), the band had shortened it in time for their debut single, *Bela Lugosi's Dead*. Amazingly, given that song's fame as one of goth's signature numbers, it never charted in the UK. In fact, Bauhaus only managed two Top 40 hits, 1982's *Ziggy Stardust* cover and 1983's *She's In Parties*. They split in 1983, but have reformed many times since and in March 2022 released their first new track in 14 years, *Drink The New Wine*.







What They Say

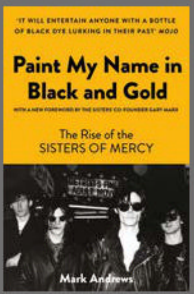
"Goth's rich escapism has been a necessary part of the austere 10-year Conservative reign. And despite its troughs – which, incidentally, have coincided with periods of dilution of mainstream pop and rock music – there is still a veritable army of people left who don't want to become part of the Me generation. The colours of darkness are still bewitching and beguiling."
***Cathi Unsworth, Sounds*, 1989**

"The sound? It's atmospheric. Somewhere between a banshee scream or a bellowing, reverberated howl that could part the Red Sea. Goth began as a transition point from the jaggedness of punk's confrontational simplicity into an elegant darkness, one cloaked in sorrow and so much emotion."
***Andi Harriman, Rolling Stone*, 2022**

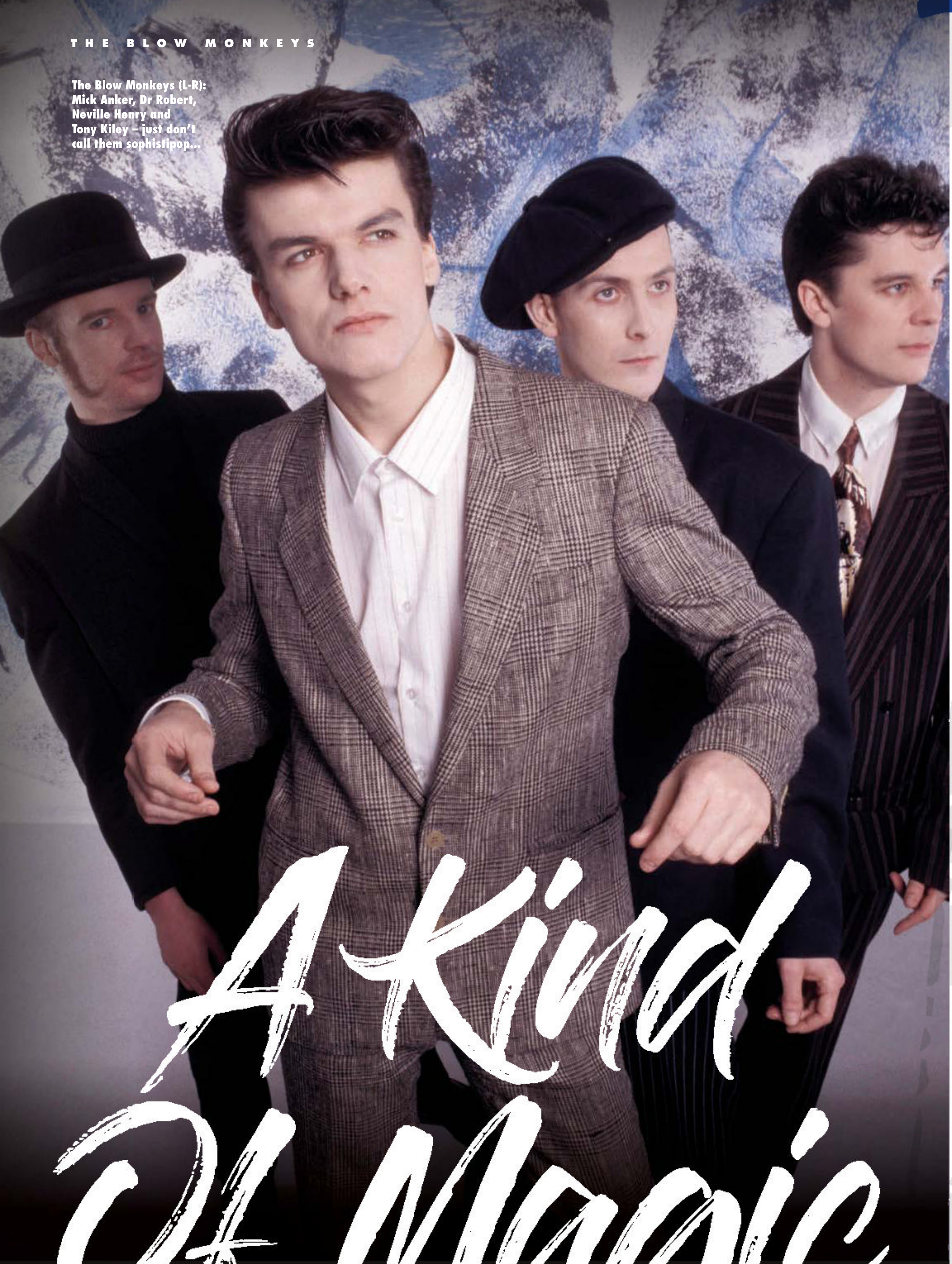
"I don't think of The Cure as a goth band. I never have. I grew up in a world where goth hadn't quite been invented in the way that we know and love it. And I was part of this subculture as much as I went to the Batcave with [Steve] Severin."
Robert Smith, quoted in *Far Out*

Further Reading

Paint My Name In Black And Gold: The Rise Of The Sisters Of Mercy by Mark Andrews



Season Of The Witch: The Book Of Goth by Cathi Unsworth (to be published in May 2023)



The Blow Monkeys (L-R): Mick Anker, Dr Robert, Neville Henry and Tony Kiley – just don't call them sophistipop...

A Kind Of Magic

© Getty

AS THE BLOW MONKEYS' *ANIMAL MAGIC* RETURNS AS A NEW DELUXE REISSUE, FRONTMAN 'DR ROBERT' HOWARD TELLS *CLASSIC POP* HOW HIS PLAN TO ROPE IN A CERTAIN CHILDREN'S TV LEGEND CAME PERILOUSLY CLOSE TO RUINING THE WHOLE THING... PAUL KIRKLEY

"I hate that phrase – sophistipop," says chief Blow Monkey Robert Howard, rolling his eyes. "I've tried to remove it from Wikipedia, but they won't let you. I don't know what it means. But whatever it is, I don't want to fucking be it."

Well this is awkward. Not just because the S word is a beloved staple of the *Classic Pop* style guide, but because the record we're here to discuss – the Blow Monkeys' 1986 sophomore album *Animal Magic* – is widely considered to be a high-water mark of the form.

The first Blow Monkeys' record to make a commercial splash, *Animal Magic* arrived in the slipstream of breakthrough single *Digging Your Scene*, which was a Top 20 hit on both sides of the Atlantic. Blending slick, soulful (and, yes, sophisticated) pop with deceptively biting lyrical dispatches from the frontline of Thatcher's Britain, it might not have been the band's most successful album – in the UK, at least, that honour falls to its follow-up, *She Was Only A Grocer's Daughter* – but nearly four decades on, there's a strong argument for it being the Blow Monkeys' definitive 80s statement hence its recent reissue – the second in a decade – is a deluxe, 4CD bells-and-whistles edition.

For the man they call Dr Robert, the Blow Monkeys' singer, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist, the album's Motown-meets-New Wave aesthetic has its somewhat unlikely origins on the terraces of King's Lynn Town FC.

"I CAN LOOK BACK AND THEORISE HOW WE GOT THERE – HOW I WAS TAPPING INTO THAT LATENT SOUL BUG. BUT I WAS JUST WRITING THE SONGS THAT CAME INTO MY HEAD."

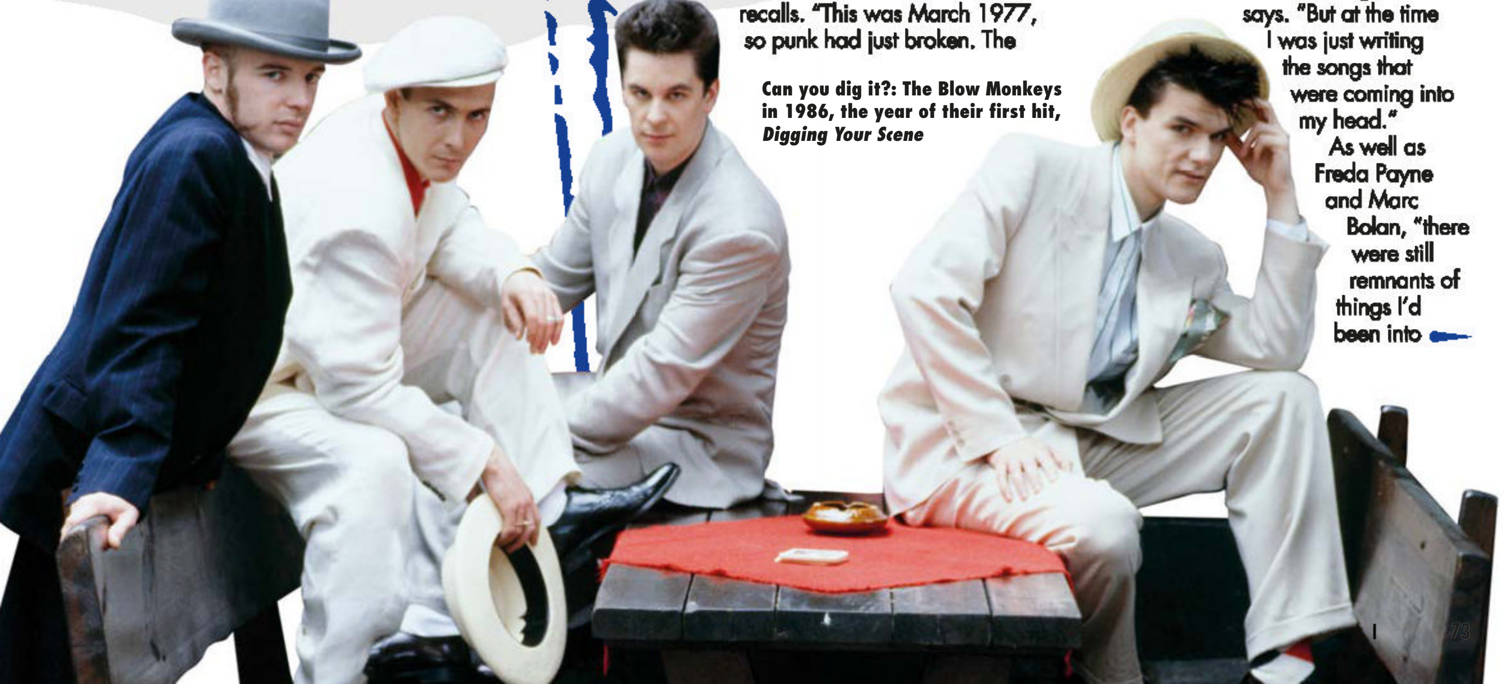
"King's Lynn is a soul town," says Robert, who'd moved to Norfolk from his native Scotland as a child. "And I'd stand on the terraces with my dad, in the freezing cold, listening to the half-time music of Freda Payne singing *Band Of Gold* – and being transported. Plus I had two sisters who were 10 years older than me, who'd bought everything that came out in the 60s – Motown, Bacharach and David, The Beatles, obviously. All those records had a big impact on me."

His further musical education, though, came with a tragic backstory: when Robert was 15, his father died, and he and his mother emigrated to join his sister in Australia. "Going from King's Lynn to Sydney was like going from black and white to colour," he recalls. "This was March 1977, so punk had just broken. The first band I ever saw in Australia was The Saints, followed by the Boys Next Door, which was Nick Cave's first band. My sister had a guitar lying about and a book, *The Eagles Made Easy*. By the time she came back from work, I'd learned the whole book – even though I didn't know any of the songs. For me, playing guitar was like meditation. I had to do it every day."

Looking back, was throwing himself into music partly a coping mechanism, to help him deal with his grief? "Absolutely," nods Robert, who's talking to *CP* over Zoom from his long-time home in southern Spain. "My father died around the same time as Marc Bolan – two very big things in my life. I took a couple of years off school and just sort of hothoused myself, playing along to early Tyrannosaurus Rex records, then The Clash, and early Jam. I just played endlessly. In retrospect, it probably *was* a form of therapy. And it still is."

By 1985, Robert was back in the UK and hatching plans with bandmates Neville Henry (sax), Mick Anker (bass) and Tony Kiley (drums) for what would become the Blow Monkeys' second album. Keen to evolve their sound from the jazz-inflected post-punk of their recent debut, *Limping For A Generation*, Robert instinctively found himself reaching back to those frozen Norfolk footie terraces. "I can look back at it now and theorise how we got there – how I was tapping into that kind of latent soul bug," he says. "But at the time I was just writing the songs that were coming into my head."

As well as Freda Payne and Marc Bolan, "there were still remnants of things I'd been into



Can you dig it?: The Blow Monkeys in 1986, the year of their first hit, *Digging Your Scene*

when I was in Australia – bands like The Laughing Clowns, that had that brass thing going on," he says, of the Sydney post-punk combo's fusion of punk guitar, be-bop drums and horn section. "The producer, Pete Wilson, had a lot to do with how [*Animal Magic*] came together. I remember playing him things like *Forever Changes* by Love and saying how I loved that mix of brass and strings, but underneath it there's a garage band playing along.

"That's what I wanted. I think the album ended up being a bit smoother than that. But in general it sounds good, it sounds like a band. There's a coherence to it," he says, citing the swooning soul of *Aeroplane City Lovesong* and Bolanesque title track among his highlights.

If things had gone to plan at the time, though, it's possible *Animal Magic* might not be *quite* so highly regarded today. Encouraged by Wilson, who had produced Sham 69's 'punk rock opera', *That's Life*, Robert was keen to write a concept album, complete with spoken word sections between the songs. "Do you remember Johnny Morris – the zoo guy who had a programme called *Animal Magic*?" he says of the one-time kids' TV staple. "I tried to get him to do it. He said, 'Thank you very much, but no thanks'. And thank God for that. I dodged a bullet there!"

© Getty

"I was just too good looking for my own good" – Dr Robert

Released in February 1986, *Digging Your Scene* was "kind of a life-changer," remembers Robert. "It's the record for which we're probably best known around the world." And while Spotify begs to differ – 1987's *It Doesn't Have To Be This Way* (the Blow Monkeys' only UK Top 10 hit) has so far racked up a couple of million more streams – it's certainly true that *Digging Your Scene* is the song that turned Robert into a pop star. Though not, as it turned out, an entirely comfortable one: for Robert, there was always an uneasy tension between the socialist soul boy punk and the pretty boy pop pin-up.

"I was just too good looking for my own good," he laughs. "And I went with it. Even on that fucking stupid [*Animal Magic*] sleeve, where I look like one of the geezers from a-ha.

"It was a schizophrenic shift [from the previous album], which might have been to our detriment a bit. But I'm not complaining. After *Digging Your Scene*, we went from playing clubs to flying into the States to support Robert Palmer at Red Rocks in the Arizona desert, and doing *American Bandstand* with Dick Clark. It was a trip, you know."

There were moments, says Robert – like having green foam sprayed at you by someone dressed in a monster suit on Saturday morning TV – when it all seemed a bit surreal. But it was also great fun. "I was a single man at the time," he notes, with a twinkle. "The only thing that bothered me was that, as a band, we had a really strong bond. But there were murmurings in the record company that maybe there was a bit of a George Michael vibe here... 'Maybe we could get you into that stratospheric pop star territory?' That was never going to happen. Mostly because I was just shit at all that," he laughs.

Besides, as pretty as both he

Dr Robert got his nickname from The Beatles song of the same name that features on *Revolver*

© Virginia Turbett

"AFTER *DIGGING MY SCENE*, WE WENT FROM PLAYING CLUBS TO FLYING TO THE STATES TO SUPPORT ROBERT PALMER AND DOING *AMERICAN BANDSTAND*... IT WAS A TRIP."

The Blow Monkeys celebrated their 40th anniversary in 2021

and the tunes may have been, Robert was also a political protest singer: *Animal Magic*, lest we forget, literally features a song called *Burn The Rich*, inspired by a slogan sprayed across the bank opposite the singer's Brixton flat – a location that gave him "a bird's eye view" of a febrile period of British history. "It was the 80s – *everything* was political," he says. "And, much as I love Billy Bragg, we can't all be Billy Bragg. I thought it was okay to still have that kind of androgynous, flamboyant nature. That didn't cancel out the fact that, deep down, I was a socialist who thought what Thatcher was doing was against nature."

Follow-up album *She Was Only A Grocer's Daughter's* title (plus the lyrical message of *It Doesn't Have To Be This Way*) offered further proof of the then-Prime Minister's rent-free existence in Robert's head. But despite those twin successes – plus an extra-curricular UK Top 10 hit for Robert, duetting with Chicago house singer Kym Mazelle on 1989's *Wait* – by the start of the 90s, it was clear the Blow Monkeys' imperial phase was over. "I knew it was going to happen, because the cars had stopped coming," he says of the band's subsequent (amicable) split. "I was just exhausted. It had been 10 years with my foot on the pedal, never stopping. I had a young family, and it felt like the right time."

Even so, Robert admits, that there was "a sense of rejection. Looking back, there were a couple of years where I felt a bit wobbly, and I drank too much. Because it happened very quickly. People stopped calling, and you think, 'Well, is that it now?' That's what really sorts the men from the boys. Because that's when you have to ask yourself, 'what is it that I really want to do?' And what I wanted to do was play music, whether there was an audience there or not."

An in-car cassette copy of Bob Dylan's *Desire* kickstarted a run of Greenwich Village-inspired solo studio albums, before the Blow Monkeys reformed in 2007 for a second act that has proved more enduring (and produced more albums) than the first phase.

Now 61, Robert – who has a grown-up son and daughter with his wife Michele – combines Blow Monkeys duties with projects such as Monks Road Social, a loose collaboration of artists whose rolling roster has included everyone from Paul Weller to former Time Lord Peter Capaldi (Robert produced the latter's recent debut album, *St. Christopher*). He also still picks up his guitar and plays every day. "I've often thought I'll probably end up busking again one day," he smiles. "And I'd be happy to do that."

In the meantime, he's quietly pleased to see *Animal Magic* getting the deluxe treatment – its original 12 tracks have been expanded to a whopping 47 via B-sides, demos and remixes – and, as a collector, is particularly excited about the single-disc white vinyl version.

So is this the definitive, final word on *Animal Magic*? "I hope so," says Robert. "I suppose when I die, they might find some other demos somewhere, but I think this is it. I'm happy to help BMG make the most of it, because they told me it was part of their 'iconic series'. If you live long enough, you become iconic. At some point, I went from being ironic to iconic," he chuckles. "So I'm happy with that." ■

● The *Animal Magic* deluxe edition is out now on BMG and was reviewed in Issue 79 of *Classic Pop*

Scene And Heard

With its infectiously jazzy groove – driven by Neville Henry's tenor sax – and sweet soul harmonies, *Digging Your Scene* succeeded in sneaking a song of solidarity with the gay community onto radio playlists around the world at the height of the moral panic over AIDS.

"Even though I wasn't gay, I went to a lot of the gay clubs in the early 80s," explains Robert. "Places like Taboo – everything about them was exciting: the music, the fashion, the whole scene. They kept the West End alive. Plus they were often the only places you could get a drink after 11 o'clock at night – that's why you'd see people like [The Fall's] Mark E. Smith in there.

"I just wanted to pay homage to that, because at the time of the AIDS crisis, they were beginning to blame that culture, calling it 'God's revenge' and all that kind of thing. So that's where that song came from.

"Not many people picked up on the lyric at the time," adds Robert. "If they had, the BBC probably would have banned it. Which is what they tended to do with us later on – as if the Blow Monkeys were going to bring down the government!".

The second album's title and its hit single were both side-swipes at Margaret Thatcher

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REVIEWS

Damon Albarn, Jamie Hewlett and a star guest list return with *Cracker Island*, the eighth album by virtual superstars Gorillaz

RATINGS

EXCELLENT ★★★★★
VERY GOOD ★★★★
AVERAGE ★★★
PATCHY ★★
POOR ★

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THE
HOT LIST
UPCOMING RELEASES THAT NEED TO BE ON YOUR CULTURAL RADAR

STEVE HARNELL

1 GREATEST HITS
LOUISE

Spanning the last 30 years of her pop career, the 30-track *Greatest Hits* boasts Louise's complete singles back catalogue in addition to nine reimagined versions of solo material as well as a smattering of Eternal gems, produced by Steve Anderson. Also featured is current single *Super Magic* among five new songs including a hook-up with the legendary Jam & Lewis.

2 CIRCADIAN RHYTHMS
JAMES ATKIN

The EMF frontman returns with his sixth solo album that promises "pure electronic music full of vocal-driven pop songs". A host of live dates to promote *Circadian Rhythms* is also scheduled for the summer.

3 DEEP LISTENING 2019-2022
RICHARD NORRIS

Rounding up The Grid man's ambient and electronic work over the past three years via the *Music For Healing* and *Abstractions* sets, Norris has edited and compiled those pieces for this immersive double album. Sonically-speaking, the tracks on *Deep Listening 2019-2022* can be filed alongside Nils Frahm, Four Tet and Ryuichi Sakamoto's ambient output.

© Matthew Eades

4 SEEKER
THE BOO RADLEYS

Building on the momentum of their reunion live dates and last year's studio album *Keep On With Falling*, The Boo Radleys have announced its follow-up – the Ronseal-titled *Eight* – and lead single *Seeker*. In other Boos-related news, there'll be a 30th anniversary reissue of their *Giant Steps* masterpiece LP plus some gigs in June.

5 THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON OFFICIAL 50TH ANNIVERSARY BOOK
PINK FLOYD

Marking the half-century of one of the most iconic albums of all time, comes this LP-sized collection of rare and previously unseen shots curated by acclaimed photographer Jill Furmanovsky. The book features backstage and onstage pics of the Floyd during their *Dark Side Of The Moon* tours between 1972-75 in the UK, Japan, North America and Europe. As well as Furmanovsky's work, the book also includes photographs by Storm Thorgerson, Aubrey Powell and Peter Christopherson plus a special section on the visual conception behind *Dark Side*'s seminal album artwork.

U2
SONGS OF SURRENDER

ISLAND

★★½

FOR ONCE, U2 ARE AS SELF-INDULGENT AND POMPOUS AS THEIR DETRACTORS BELIEVE, ON A QUADRUPLE ALBUM THAT IS SORELY LACKING IN A PROMISED RADICAL SPIRIT

Just when Bono's excellent autobiography, *Surrender*, had started to turn neutrals' affections back towards U2, his band offer up a baffling example of over-indulgence which their critics have long accused them of.

Calling *Songs Of Surrender* "a reimagining" hints that something radical is happening on these 40 new versions. Instead, with very few exceptions, it's essentially 40 instant B-sides, the kind of "(Acoustic Version)" filler that littered CD2 singles in the late 90s.

None of these new versions are terrible, bar a wet *Sunday Bloody Sunday* which would sound lazy if dusted off in soundcheck. But about two-thirds of these four records is just pleasant and pointless, the kind of amiable workout you'd expect from a band of U2's vintage. Which has never been what the band represented before now.

Divided into four sides and 10 tracks for each member, there's no real variety in mood between them: The Edge's is a little more ambient, Adam Clayton's more string-based, but album producer Bob Ezrin offers none of the energetic punk, dance or pop flavours of U2, bar an extraordinary Bono falsetto on *Desire* and a skittish, excitable *Two Hearts Beat As One*.

If the latter had been the template, *Songs Of Surrender* could have offered fresh insights into such a familiar canon. As it is, it'll only thrill fans whose favourite disc on a boxset is the acoustic demos.

Since about half an hour after it was released in 1997, U2 have spoken of a desire to re-record *Pop*. That would have been a far more interesting idea than whatever *Songs Of Surrender* is supposed to achieve. Given their stated frustrations with *Pop*, it's doubly bizarre that only *Dirty Day* from that album is tackled anew here, Adam Clayton playing double bass on a Beethoven pastiche which is witty enough, yet far flimsier than the original version.

Larry Mullen Jr's surgery will prevent him working this year. That's obviously sad for the band. But they could have used the drummer's convalescence to help people miss U2, to make them hunger for new music after the underrated *Songs Of Experience*.

But no. Within *Songs Of Surrender* is a decent stripped-back album. Any good A&R could have spotted the best 12 songs – a moving *Cedarwood Road* here, a plaintive *Every Breaking Wave* there – and advised U2 which tracks to let go. Trouble is, who tells U2 to bin three albums, especially given this project's financial imperative? So, we're left with a bloated shrug which naysayers will be laughing at until the next proper U2 album arrives. Whose is your favourite reimagining of these four albums? Regrettably, who cares? **John Earls**

REVIEWS

GORILLAZ
CRACKER ISLAND

PARLOPHONE

★★★★

Now matching the output of Damon Albarn's other band, *Cracker Island* is Gorillaz' eighth album in their 22-year career. It's also Albarn's seventh album since Blur's last LP, *The Magic Whip*, in 2015. None have been terrible, but it's also 13 years since an undisputed classic in *Plastic Beach*, while last year's solo effort *The Nearer The Mountain, More Pure The Stream Flows* was Albarn at his most noodling, introspective and divisive.

Although it was announced in August 2022, there's been an audible shrug around *Cracker Island*'s prospects: a sense that, whatever the quality, there'll be another Albarn album along in a minute, so let's not get too excited. Of course, Blur's reunion has also overshadowed even an LP this star-studded.

Which is really rather unfair. 2020's *Strange Timez* was underrated, and it seems Albarn daring to be prolific will be held against album eight, too. Certainly, the preview singles have been amongst Gorillaz' finest, whether the title track's stellar rapid-fire Thundercat collaboration or *Skinny Ape*'s guest-free punk, Albarn as saucer-eyed and pogoing as Blur's *Popscene* days.

True, some of the star names are wasted: Stevie Nicks mumbles in the background of the otherwise energetic *Oil* and the credits claim Beck is present on parched ballad *Possession Island*, but quite where is a mystery.

At least their blending into the background helps make *Cracker Island* one of Gorillaz' most cohesive and concise albums. More importantly, it's got the maverick fun of their best, too: reggaeton rapper Bad Bunny is as gleeful and up for it as any past Gorillaz guest on *Tormenta*, which follows *Tarantula*'s brilliant ballad-to-banger experimentation.

Arriving just after Dave Rowntree's engaging debut solo LP and Graham Coxon's fabulous new duo The Waeve, by sticking with Gorillaz Albarn is suddenly the most predictable member of Blur. Little matter: he remains an intuitive, celebratory pop star. It's time everyone remembered that, Wembley Stadium or no. **JE**

© Ebru Yildiz

P!NK
TRUSTFALL

RCA

★★★½

Her reputation is as one of our more interesting mainstream pop stars; a bit of a maverick who's unafraid to take punky left turns, whose calling card is unvarnished honesty. But in truth, it's been a while since P!nk surprised us. Her last few albums have largely reprised similar themes and last signature hit, the brilliantly brazen *So What*, is a decade-and-a-half old now. P!nk has been coasting for some time.

Sad to say, then, that *Trustfall* is more of the same. The uptempo tracks are unspectacular – *Runaway* is a sleek piece of Weeknd-ish electropop, *Hate Me* this album's ballsy power-pop anthem, even if it sounds a little too close to Avril Lavigne's *Girlfriend* for comfort.

Worse, though, is the Max Martin-produced single *Never Gonna Not Dance Again*, a disco homage (if you can call it that) which lands cheesy side down. The only time that P!nk tries something new here is *Kids In Love*, a folksy collaboration with First Aid Kit, which is sweet, but minor.

As ever with P!nk there are ballads, many of them, especially in the album's final third. There's no doubting that she writes from the heart. But, because of the production, the arrangements – or both – tracks like *Lost Cause* and *Our Song* get lost in translation. Pianos are suitably weepy, the chord changes oh-so predictable. They fail to connect.

Rather than an authentic artistic vision, *Trustfall* sounds compromised, a label-driven box-ticking exercise. This needn't necessarily be a problem, except P!nk is known (and loved) for her supposed authenticity. *Trustfall* is functional and will do its job of keeping its creator at pop's top table, but she's capable of so much better than this. High time she ditched the formula, took another left turn, and surprised us all again. **Beth Simpson**

© Brian Sweeney

THE BLUEBELLS
IN THE 21ST CENTURY

LAST NIGHT FROM GLASGOW

★★★★

THE BLUEBELLS ALWAYS SOUNDED OLD BEFORE THEIR TIME. NOW THEY REALLY ARE VINTAGE ARTISTS, THEIR FIRST STUDIO ALBUM FOR 31 YEARS IS A BITTERSWEET TRIUMPH.

If The Bluebells had made an album called *In The 21st Century* during their brief 80s peak, it would have doubtless been an unlikely attempt to go futurist, an unwieldy Sigue Sigue Sputnik makeover from a group who were born to be nostalgists.

Only the third album of their career, and the first since 1992's *Second* failed to be released outside of Japan, the real *In The 21st Century* is a simple statement that here come Bobby Bluebell and the McCluskey brothers at last, ready to finally make the music their wistful leanings always suggested they should.

Born out of Last Night From Glasgow giving 1984's classic *Sisters* an overdue reissue two years ago, the response hasn't so much reinvigorated The Bluebells as belatedly allowed the trio an excuse to make the full-length LP their previous short-lived reunions lacked the momentum for.

In his real-life alter-ego of Robert Hodgens, Bobby had recently co-written Altered Images' comeback album, *Mascara Streakz*. That sense of renewal bleeds into his own band, with a lyrical yearning for pop yore made explicit throughout these 12 songs.

The Ballad Of The Bells is an obvious opening gambit in reminding listeners of the band's fate. Hodgens' voice is more careworn and deeper than *Sisters*, but what did anyone expect? *Orienteering* and the beautiful *Stonehouse Violets* continue the reflective reverie, though *Living Your Life Out Loud* is the only duff moment, too sparse to avoid becoming twee. Meanwhile, *Anyone Could Be A Buzzcock* harks back to the McCluskeys' pre-Bluebells punk days and is a welcome surprise, abrasive and straightforwardly rocking among its genteel surroundings.

Mostly, Hodgens' career as a songwriter for everyone from Sinead O'Connor to B*Witched via Texas and Ian McCulloch comes through, as *In The 21st Century* takes a restless approach to pop. Hodgens' ruminative delivery means The Go-Betweens are The Bluebells' resting elder-statesmen face, but lead single *Gone Tomorrow* echoes Paul Carrack-era Squeeze, while *Beautiful Mess* similarly works up a sweat, however elegantly.

Built on a percussive earworm riff, *Daddy Was An Engineer* shares Orange Juice's ability to get a controlled groove on, while *Disneyland And Rock 'N' Roll* is the most complex moment, negotiating its appropriately *Lion King*-style opening into a stargazing Super Furry Animals psychedelic second half.

If it's less breezy than *Young At Heart*, *In The 21st Century* could reasonably easily have followed *Sisters* as a cracking second album in 1986. That it's taken The Bluebells 39 years to get here shouldn't be held against them. If songs as infectious as *She Rises* are their future, this late flowering is still an enticing prospect. **JE**

ADAM LAMBERT
HIGH DRAMA

WARNER

★★★½

As a way of escaping the shadow of his grisly existence since 2014 as Karaoke Freddie in the dignity-dodging Queen + Adam Lambert roadshow, a covers album seems a strange move. You want to redefine yourself away from Queen's penny-chasing charabanc with *more* cover versions? Hmm.

And yet… Being a judge on an ITV talent show hosted by Olly Murs via last year's *Starstruck* seemingly acting as the wake-up call he needed, here Lambert brings the extravagance and sauce that first made him a star with, well, cover versions on *American Idol* in 2009.

Lambert is often a fabulous interpreter, and only a horrific toytown techno take on Kings Of Leon's *Sex On Fire* that'd solely be palatable coming out of a haunted out-of-season dodgems, lowers the tone on these 11 covers. He can be faithful – the only problem with his version of Duran's *Ordinary World* which launched *High Drama* is that it was perhaps too tasteful to offer anything new. See also Lambert's melancholic acoustic take on P!nk ballad, *My Attic*.

If his *Getting Older* also inhabits the stately mood of Billie Eilish's original, Lambert injects a regretful, contemplative air suitable for someone recently turned 40, skilfully managing to avoid any vampiric exploitation of Eilish's youngsters' ballad. Of other recent artists, a gloriously OTT guitar solo sends a rocking take of Lana Del Rey's *West Coast* fully into orbit.

As is often the case with covers albums, it's the unexpected that soars highest and Lambert manages to add fresh insight to *Do You Really Want To Hurt Me?* via synths that are both low-key yet invigoratingly pop, the vocals similarly restrained yet passionate.

But it's the most obscure song on *High Drama*, Jobriath's early LGBTQ+ anthem, *I'm A Man*, from 1973, that's the undoubted standout here. A marauding mix of Hi-NRG, country and big old statement vocals, it's Lambert embracing his inner Scissor Sisters and emerging with an irresistible smirk.

If forgiveness for Queen is still some way off, here's a reminder of what a versatile talent Lambert can be when he's not hanging about with May & Taylor. **JE**

NATALIE MERCHANT
KEEP YOUR COURAGE

NONESUCH

★★★★

Natalie Merchant first broke through in the 80s as the free-spirited lead singer of folk-infused rockers 10,000 Maniacs. Along with R.E.M., the New York band served as the social conscience of college rock, as evidenced by lyrics that tackled heavy topics like environmental concerns and navigating pregnancy.

Merchant enjoyed immense solo success after leaving 10,000 Maniacs in 1993, thanks to sparse, tender songs like *Carnival* and *Kind & Generous*. However, she's released albums only sporadically after 2001's *Motherland*, preferring instead to focus on teaching music to children and raising her now college-aged daughter.

Becoming an empty nester was one impetus for *Keep Your Courage*, Merchant's first new music since 2014's self-titled album. She wrote these songs during the pandemic, but stresses in the LP's liner notes that the collection isn't about that turbulent time: "For the most part, this is an album about the human heart."

That assessment translates to sophisticated music driven by ornate storytelling, lush orchestration from seven different composers (including Stephen Barber and Gabriel Kahane) and horn arrangements from jazz trombonist Steve Davis, along with contributions from Celtic folk group Lúnasa and clarinettist Kinan Azmeh.

© Shervin Lainez

Highlights include *The Feast Of Saint Valentine*, a stripped-down tune boasting delicate arrangements dominated by quivering strings and minimalist piano; a majestic take on *Hunting The Wren*, originally by rising Irish band Lankum; and the surging chamber-folk epic, *Sister Tilly*. Merchant sounds even more dynamic on two duets with Abena Koomson-Davis from The Resistance Revival Chorus. On one of those, the lively, soul-inspired *Come On, Aphrodite*, warm horns give way to a searing trumpet solo full of wisdom.

It's always been admirable that Merchant only released solo albums when she felt like she had something to say. *Keep Your Courage* certainly fits that bill, while being a welcome return to form to boot. **Annie Zaleski**

BMX BANDITS
DREADED LIGHT

TAPETE

★★★★

There's a long tradition of pop and rock stars moonlighting as film composers, going back to Paul McCartney's score for 1966's *The Family Way* all the way to Radiohead's Jonny Greenwood, who's now Paul Thomas Anderson's go-to music guy. The latest name to make the move is Duglas T. Stewart, captain of Scots retro popsters BMX Bandits, who was approached by first-time filmmaker Mark MacNicol to score his low-budget debut, *Dreaded Light*.

A claustrophobic chamber piece, with a subtle supernatural edge about a man consumed with grief after the death of his wife, the movie's intense themes prove a snug fit for Stewart – who collaborates on this by turns tender and scarring score with his BMX bud, Andrew Pattie.

Course, the great test of any soundtrack album is if it works out of context with the movie it's spun from, and blessedly much of this music can stand on its own. But beware, this is in no way a traditional BMX Bandits release. Of the 23 tracks, only two are actual songs. For the most part, this is an instrumental album of two to three-minute tracks. While some will slip into any BMX favourites playlist (the Mercury Rev-evoking *Spinning Through Time*, one of the two vocal-led songs, is a delight), others, such as the jittery, disorientating *Kettle O'Worms* are mood pieces that work fine enough in isolation, but are given a richer meaning when married to the movie's visuals.

Much of the album shows a more experimental side to BMX Bandits than we've been used to, and that's no bad thing. It'll be interesting to see what effect this journey into darker waters will have on the next regular Bandits album. With *Dreaded Light*, MacNicol has made an assured, critically lauded first feature, but it would struggle to be even half as effective without Stewart's powerfully emotive score. Recommended: but watch the film first. **Steve O'Brien**

SIGALA
EVERY CLOUD

MINISTRY OF SOUND

★★

The alias of Norfolk-born DJ Bruce Fielder, Sigala has hammered away at the chart since 2015's debut single, *Easy Love* – based on a sample of The Jackson 5's *ABC* – reached No.1.

Essentially an English equivalent of friend and collaborator David Guetta, Sigala has been formulaic ever since. His 2018 debut LP, *Brighter Days*, featured Nile Rodgers, Sean Paul, The Vamps and a rare Kylie external appearance, but still only reached No.14 in the UK: albums aren't the point of an artist like Sigala, and *Every Cloud* is further proof.

As with its predecessor, these 20 tracks are each designed to be singles, or possibly a new theme to Channel 4's irrepressibly chirpy *Sunday Brunch*. It's the soundtrack to midnight in a provincial club. Nothing wrong with that in isolation, but anyone trying to make it through all of this will get a tension headache.

Despite the stellar list of co-writers – Tom Grennan and Lewis Capaldi are among the expected background big-hitters including Megan Cottone – you'd need an electron microscope to differentiate between *Mood For You* and *All By Myself*.

10 songs have already been singles, including James Arthur collab *Lasting Lover*, which does very bad things indeed to MGMT's *Time To Pretend*. You might dance to any of it for one song. But 20? Whatever *Every Cloud* is, it's not an album. **JE**

LEVELLERS COLLECTIVE
TOGETHER ALL THE WAY

ON THE FIDDLE

★★★

The notion of the Levellers reimagining their back catalogue as "stripped back, more traditional folk songs" might seem an odd prospect, as they were hardly awash with shredding guitar solos or programmed LinnDrum beats in the first place.

But there are gains to be made here. Despite swapping the fiddle for… a slightly different-sounding fiddle… *The Game* (from 1991's *Levelling The Land*) succeeds in bringing out the song's brooding menace, while a new take on 2002's *Wake The World* breaks the acoustic makeover rule by actually being faster than the original – and is undeniably more appealing.

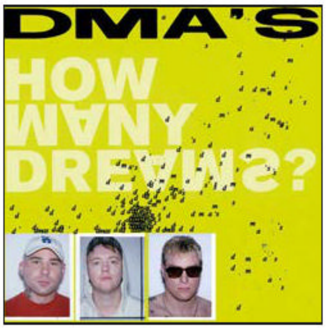
Others fare less well – *Battle Of The Beanfield* sucks all the energy from one of the band's greatest rabble-rousing anthems, while some just feel a bit redundant: you couldn't slide a Rizla between the title track and its 1991 original.

You also get three new tracks for your buck: recent single *Down By The River 'O'* – a cover of long-time collaborator Rev Hammer's song about the great Buntingford flood of 1968 – is a classic Levellers stomper. *Man O' War* sounds a bit like a folk version of The Hooters' *Satellite* (almost certainly not intentionally) and *Sitting In The Social* closes the album with the cautionary tale of a busker waiting for his "giro". Well, what did you expect? Yacht rock? **Paul Kirkley**

DMA'S
HOW MANY DREAMS?

I OH YOU

★★★★



Originally, Aussie trio DMA's managed to export Britpop back to Britain, cheerily admitting their love of Oasis and The Stone Roses, with 2016 debut LP *Hills End* stuffed with indie anthems. By third album *The Glow* in 2020, they were experimenting with Stuart Price and had risen to second on the bill at Reading And Leeds Festival.

Price is back, here with Muse veteran Rich Costey and rising Australian producer Konstantin Kersting, as DMA's adroitly manage to distil all their shades, which incorporate those early anthemics on singalongs like the title track and *Fading Like A Picture*. The middle of the album is more introspective, Tommy O'Dell having matured into a careworn singer for the hard-won empowerment of *Forever*.

It ends on the trio's most all-out rave moments, the triumphant *Something We're Overcoming* segueing into the six-minute Transglobal Underground-flavoured mysticism of *De Carle* as O'Dell sings about the rapture. If *Everybody's Saying Thursday's The Weekend* and *Dear Future* are about getting fans to hold their phones up at festivals, *De Carle* brings the glowsticks.

O'Dell, Johnny Took and Matt Mason's gift is for getting straight to the big emotions and letting them out with the hooks to match. That's a far rarer talent than *How Many Dreams?* manages to make it look, song after song. **JE**

ELLIE GOULDING
HIGHER THAN HEAVEN

POLYDOR

★★★

Ellie Goulding has enjoyed an enviable streak of success since her 2010 debut LP, *Lights*, to the tune of multiple No.1 singles (most recently a faithful 2020 take on Joni Mitchell's *River*) and several multi-platinum albums.

However, like so many artists, the pandemic somewhat derailed her career momentum. Although Goulding topped the chart with her last full-length effort, 2020's collaboration-heavy *Brightest Blue*, many of that album's singles missed the UK Top 40.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, *Higher Than Heaven* sounds like Goulding regrouping to embrace the tried-and-true formula she's previously used for pop success. The album largely eschews guests – save for the Big Sean-featuring highlight *Easy Lover* – to focus on slick, uptempo dance-pop with nods to disco, 80s synth-pop, sinewy R&B and house.

Creatively, Goulding works with familiar names, reuniting with Greg Kurstin, with whom she worked on her first No.1 single, *Burn*, while lead single *Midnight Dreams* was co-written by proven hitmaker Stephen Kozmeniuk, who was also had a hand in Dua Lipa's mega-hit *Levitating*.

Fans will undoubtedly be pleased by *Higher Than Heaven*'s electro and dancefloor bent. But, although Goulding's vocals make even familiar signifiers sound refreshed, *Higher Than Heaven* ultimately plays it a bit safe and doesn't break any new ground. **AZ**

RAYE
MY 21ST CENTURY BLUES

HUMAN RE SOURCES

★★★★

It's always heart-warming when an artist who felt diminished by their previous record company breaks out and finds themselves triumphantly proving the major label doubters wrong.

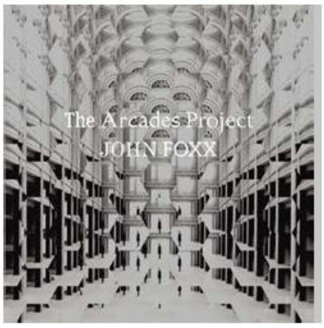
That's the tale of Raye, who'd spent the last decade on Polydor releasing EPs and popping up on no end of collabs with the likes of David Guetta, Joel Corry and Disclosure, but was denied the opportunity of releasing her own full-length studio album. Since departing, the Londoner has gone independent and saw in the first full week of 2023 atop the singles chart with her banger, *Escapism*. Hurrah!

The resulting album doesn't disappoint, setting itself up as a jazz club-type performance. Raye flips from dismissing ne'er-do-wells on Amy-esque moments such as *The Thrill Is Gone* and *Mary Jane*, Dua-type bangers like *Black Mascara* and *Worth It*, plus Mabel-ish buzzers including *Flip A Switch* and *Five Star Hotels*. These and more prove *Escapism* wasn't a one-off. Alongside calling out bad men, Raye tackles actual 21st Century blues such as anorexia on *Body Dysmorphia* and climate change on *Environmental Anxiety*. It's a stunning debut that shows Raye's anguish at not being able to release a full-lengther wasn't delusion. You end up hoping that the goons who denied Raye this chance will be furious once it's sold by the shedload. **Ian Wade**

JOHN FOXX
THE ARCADES PROJECT

METAMATIC

★★★



Having begun exploring piano in depth via collaborations with American composers Harold Budd and Ruben Garcia 20 years ago, John Foxx's solo piano debut shares his former colleagues' abstract minimalism.

Following 2020's *Howl* with John Foxx And The Maths, *The Arcades Project*'s serenity seems a necessary restorative, a moment of calm to explore without his late piano mentors' tutelage. The album is named after German philosopher Walter Benjamin's study of flaneurs, who made walking around Paris' new shopping arcades of the early 20th century into a lifestyle. There's a suitable sense of space and tranquillity here in the awed wonder of *In All Your Glory*.

Despite his occasional blasts of rage, Foxx has always been a musician who knows what to leave out, and the 12 pieces' spartan playing here is frequently beautiful, though the lack of accompaniment means it's not the best album for newcomers.

Where Foxx deserves credit is that, while *The Sea Inside*'s more melodic nature could carry a vocal, none of the tracks miss his rich voice, existing happily in their own peaceful world.

You wouldn't want Foxx to quit making regular (by his standards) rock music, but *The Arcades Project* works in isolation, showing he can be a solo piano man if he wants. Perfect for a stroll round your local Arndale. **JE**

INHALER
CUTS AND BRUISES
POLYDOR
★★★★

After reaching No.1 with debut album *It Won't Always Be Like This* in 2021, the perma-touring Dubliners hone their anthems into sounding like they're even more ready to take on the big stages for forthcoming support slots to Harry Styles, Arctic Monkeys and Sam Fender. Elijah Hewson's vocals now have the confidence and power to match a more supple rhythm section, while Josh Jenkinson is maturing into one of the most diverse new guitarists around. Cheeky and heartfelt in equal measure, Inhaler's time earning their stripes pays off. **JE**

THE LATHUMS
FROM NOTHING TO A LITTLE BIT MORE
ISLAND
★★★★

Despite debut LP *How Beautiful Life Can Be* making No.1, Wigan quartet The Lathums haven't had it easy, losing their bassist, with bookending tracks *Struggle* and *Undeserving* documenting singer Alex Moore's unease with success. He should prepare for more: *Turmoil* sounds like The Housemartins' mythical follow-up to *Caravan Of Love*, while *Facets* and *Lucky Bean* have a new energy hinted at on single *Sad Face Baby*. Whatever issues the band have been dealing with, it's led to some mighty tunes. **JE**

STEVE MASON
BROTHERS AND SISTERS
DOUBLE SIX
★★★½

Although working with Celeste/Joy Crookes producer Tev'n, Mason's seventh album away from The Beta Band has less of a pop edge than 2019's *About The Light*. Generally from Mason's spiritual side, and featuring a gospel quartet, the ballads have a warmth for humanity and quietly hopeful messages. But it's on the elastic groove of *The People Say* where he's at his most commanding, bringing the blissed-out communality of his past beats that match his hypnotic voice so well. Moving, powerful and only occasionally worthy. **JE**

THE GO-TEAM
GET UP SEQUENCES PART TWO
MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES
★★★

Though named as if it's the companion piece to 2021's *Get Up Sequences Part One*, this latest album from Brighton's premier pop scrapbookers could easily be titled *Thunder, Lightning, Strike Part Seven*, so unchanged is it from their 2004 debut. As with that album, though, *Part Two* repackages pop's past in thrilling technicolour, a pop culture cut-and-paste job that sounds simultaneously retro and futuristic. It's just a shame that, 19 years on from that first Mercury-nominated album, they're still remaking it. **SO**

KATIE MELUA
LOVE AND MONEY
BMG
★★★★

Katie Melua's gorgeous ninth album arrives amidst major life changes, both positive (meeting a new partner, becoming pregnant with her first child) and challenging (the death of the psychiatrist who cared for Melua after her 2010 hospitalisation). Recorded with Leo Abrahams, producer of her 2020 Top 10 LP, *Album No. 8*, the collection addresses these shifts with nuance and care. With its glacial tempo and reflective piano, *14 Windows* touches on finding emotional equilibrium, while the folk-leaning *First Date* meditates on the first blushes of romance. **AZ**

FEVER RAY
RADICAL ROMANTICS
RABID
★★★★

If you pine for the days when Björk wrote actual songs, rather than spliced ill-matched instrumentation and caterwauled over it, you'd be advised to check out Fever Ray's third album. Ex-The Knife vocalist Karen Dreijer is an equally uncompromising Nordic artist, also with a unique drawling vocal style, but leavens this with (hurrah!) some beautiful poppy melodies. Dreijer's most accessible album since The Knife's 2006 breakthrough *Silent Shout* – the lusty, carnal *Shiver* and the punky *Even It Out* pulsate like early Human League. Icy, but hospitable. And recommended. **BS**

MEDIÆVAL BÆBES
TALES OF LOVE AND LOSS
QUEEN OF SHEBA
★★★★

Following their unlikely Orbital collaboration, the preeminent gothic-medieval vocal collective return to familiar territory for a compilation of a cappella works. Encompassing all bar one of their first seven albums (1998's *Worldes Blysse* is ignored), *Tales…* offers spellbinding interpretations of trad ballads *Scarborough Fayre* and *She Moved Through The Fair*. Further suggesting they've been transported from another time, poems-turned-songs including *Slay Me Suddenly* and a live take of *Foweles In The Frith* sound like they're from the centuries-old canon, too. **Jon O'Brien**

LOWLY
KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK
BELLA UNION
★★★★

Although describing themselves as pop, Danish quintet Lowly are mostly a world away from the expected tropes of Scandipop. *Seasons* slinks past like Dubstar, *The Fish* and *Nothing Much* share the shuffling groove of Doves and the title track has the hard-won optimism of Badly Drawn Boy. If they gloomily mope along like a hungover a-ha on *Feel Someone*, that's atoned by the astonishing *You Are Good And I Love You*: a total earworm, featuring a rare use of vocal treatment adding to Soffie Viemose's compelling charisma. There's often an indefinable magic at play here. **JE**

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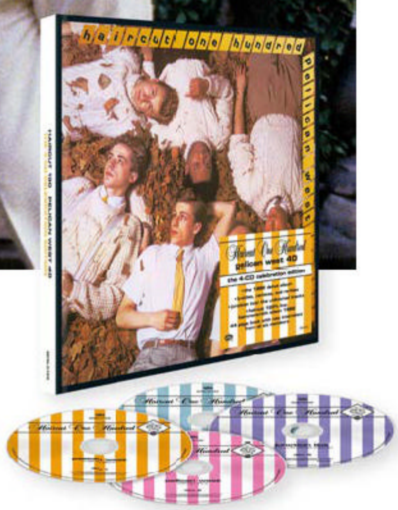


HAIRCUT 100
PELICAN WEST

DEMON

★★★★

ALWAYS DESTINED TO IMPLODE, THIS THOROUGH 4CD/4LP BOXSET SHOWS JUST HOW WEIRD AND WONDERFUL HAIRCUT 100 WERE WHEN THEY BRIEFLY KEPT IT TOGETHER

Spandau Ballet and Duran Duran managed to rule the 80s as fivepieces. But there seems to be a reason why so few bands dare risk succeeding with six or more members. OK, there's Madness, but none of the universe's rational laws apply to *them.*

Haircut 100's sixpiece were magical precisely because they were so unusual – what sounded like winningly simple pop songs had more intricate details going on the more you peered at them. There are still fresh layers to unpick 40 years later, thanks to Marc Fox's percussion and Phil Smith's saxophone co-existing like the finest illusionists alongside their various bandmates' more regular instrumentation.

From Gered Mankowitz's classic autumnal sleeve shot onwards, here was a band at odds with the futurism that was so prevalent everywhere else. Initially indebted to XTC, lyrically Nick Heyward shared Andy Partridge's yearning for a mythical lost England, but was able to upend that nostalgia with a Britfunk intensity. *Kingsize...* starts like it's going to be a swoonsome ballad, waiting all of 15 seconds before Les Nemes and Blair Cunningham's rhythm section explodes. Only *Modern Life Is Rubbish*-era Blur have remotely resembled Haircut 100 since and, even allowing for Alex James' galloping bass playing, Blur never had the Haircuts' capacity for funk.

Elsewhere this issue, all the band rave about Bob Sargeant. The Beat's producer was certainly adept at getting the disparate elements in sync, so that *Love Plus One* and *Snow Girl* sound brighter and more urgent than most of their peers, while conversely *Lemon Firebrigade* has a melodic weight underpinning its dancefloor insistency.

Three bands in one at any given moment – and that was just in Graham Jones' versatile guitar work – Haircut 100 couldn't last. There have been plenty of reissues before of the original lineup's only LP together, but none anywhere near this thorough. Standalone hit *Nobody's Fool* neatly evoked The Beatles even before Tears For Fears' *Sowing The Seeds Of Love*, while their B-sides were an opportunity to further hone their funk. A concert from Hammersmith Odeon shows them happily cohabiting on stage, capable of magic even without Sargeant's guidance, and mischievous with it, as Jones gently teases: "Are you bored yet?" among the hysteria.

Although widely bootlegged, the demos for an unfinished follow-up album, *Junction Box*, hadn't sounded as crisp until now. You can debate whether it really would have outshone *Pelican West* – some songs sorely lack Heyward's infectiously enthusiastic vocals. But there's further melodic joy in *Brookfield Girl* and *I Believe In Sundays*, not to mention the three songs Nick ran off with for his solo debut, *North Of A Miracle.*

Already a gem, now as informative as possible on six very different people holding it together, however briefly. **John Earls**

ROBERT PALMER
THE ISLAND YEARS: 1974-1985
EDSEL/DEMON

★★★½

© Getty

To some, Robert Palmer is synonymous with *Addicted To Love*, if as much for its uncomfortably sexualised promo video as its unforgettably huge synth-rock riffs. Nonetheless, eight albums preceded 1985's *Riptide*, this collection's post-Power Station finale, which also provided the irresistible Jam & Lewis production *I Didn't Mean To Turn You On*.

Members of The Meters and Little Feat help 1974's *Sneakin' Sally Through the Alley*, with the title track and *Sailin' Shoes* like Stevie Wonder yacht-rocking and *Through It All There's You* jamming like Donny Hathaway. The Muscle Shoals Horns burnish 1975's *Pressure Drop*, notable for *Give Me An Inch*'s Philly strings, *Work To Make It Work*'s loose funk and the title track's Bahamian flavours, while the latter resurface on 1976's *Some People Can Do What They Like*. *One Last Look* sets a slick tone, but elsewhere there's funk (*Have Mercy*), a Harry Belafonte cover (*Man Smart, Woman Smarter*) and dub reggae (*Hard Head*).

1978's *Double Fun* embraces Palmer's laidback new home in Nassau, especially the classic *Every Kinda People*'s pretty steel pan backing, but *You Overwhelm Me* is over-orchestrated and a cover of The Kinks' *You Really Got Me* outstays its welcome.

On the following year's *Secrets*, Palmer is energetic on *Woman You're Wonderful* but, though Todd Rundgren's *Can We Still Be Friends?* is immaculately blue-eyed, his *Bad Case Of Loving You (Doctor, Doctor)* is rather overblown.

1980's curt *Clues* swerves left, from *Looking For Clues*' itchy New Wave to *Johnny And Mary*'s edgy synth-pop, with Gary Numan helping cover *I Dream Of Wires*.

If *Maybe It's Live*'s live portion is forgettable, the studio-bound *Si Chatouillieux* is as fascinating as *Some Guys Have All The Luck* isn't.

Ultimately, like 1983's *Pride* – distinguished by *You Are In My System*'s electro-soul and the unusually sensitive *Want You More* – Palmer's first dozen years reveal a restless man given to flashes of brilliance, of which there's plenty of evidence in this boxset. **Wyndham Wallace**

VARIOUS
DANCE CRAZE
CHRYSALIS

★★★★★

Originally conceived by American producer Joe Massot as a film about Madness, he binned that idea in favour of documenting the whole 2 Tone movement. *Dance Craze* filmed performances in 1980 around the UK and US, featuring Madness, The Specials, The Selecter, Bad Manners, The Beat and The Bodysnatchers.

It was first released in 1981, with an accompanying soundtrack album containing 15 of the 27 performances. The album became a staple of every pre-teen and teenage rudeperson's collection, especially those (too much) too young to attend the manic and occasionally fractious shows.

Now, the whole package has been remastered and expanded. Across a 3CD or 3LP set, the album includes the full 27-song soundtrack on the first two discs. A third disc recreates the original 1981 soundtrack – but now features alternate mixes and even different concerts to the movie. The film itself – previously consigned to grainy VHS for decades – has been polished up for its first DVD and Blu-Ray release, too, with Clive Langer and Alan Winstanley overseeing a 5.1 surround sound mix, while The Specials main man Jerry Dammers is involved in a new Dolby Atmos mix.

Everyone is on top form and the crowd almost act as additional bandmembers, with each party feeding off their energy. Especially in the case of The Specials, basically *exploding* across the stage with belter *Too Much Too Young* and Madness en route to pop domination powerhousing through *One Step Beyond*. There's genuine tension with the slinky skanking of The Beat's *Mirror In The Bathroom*, knee-trembling giddiness of The Selecter and elegant ska energy of The Bodysnatchers' *Let's Do Rock Steady* – and things go off the scale to the roof-raising knees-up of Bad Manners.

It's an essential document of a movement that was on fire both on record and live, and explanation enough about how 2 Tone was a genuine multi-racial youthquake and one of the most thrilling moments in pop. **Ian Wade**

© Getty

VARIOUS
YOUNG LIMBS RISE AGAIN: THE STORY OF THE BATCAVE NIGHTCLUB 1982-1985

EDSEL/DEMON

★★★★

THE HOME OF GOTH IS CELEBRATED ON THIS EXHAUSTIVE COMPILATION SHOWING THE DEVIANT JOY UNDER THE BLACK CLOAK OF SUPPOSED GLOOM

As influential to goth as The Blitz was to New Romantic, for three years in two different (but equally debauched) tiny clubs in Soho, The Batcave offered succour to Britain's miscreant youth.

If New Romantic had been all about glamour and escapism, goth was there for anyone who either wanted a good wallow in how being born was such a curse, or to forget about the world outside and get interested in extremely unlikely sex toys for a bit. Sometimes both.

In the same way that most Britpop bands refuse to acknowledge they were part of Britpop, so half the artists featured on this wonderful 90-song 5CD/63-song 6LP set would pout even harder at the notion they were goth.

Despite looking like *that* throughout the 80s, calling himself Count Andrew Von Eldritch and sulking in his crypt for 33 years instead of entering the studio, the bone-idle get will build an effigy of anyone who has the temerity to call his band, The Sisters Of Mercy, "goth" rather than "a rock & roll band." Yet here they are, opening proceedings with *Temple Of Love*. In fairness, their 1983 masterpiece rocks hard under the dry ice. One of nine extended versions, it also demonstrates the compilers' affinity for keeping it upbeat. The first three CDs are collectively dubbed *A Night On The Dancefloor*. Sure enough, the most furious turbo-charged moments by The Cure, The Cramps, Siouxsie And The Banshees and The Birthday Party are here. So too are grimier, deliciously seedy songs by otherwise upstanding citizens including Echo And The Bunnymen, Magazine, The Fall and Simple Minds, with the menace under the extravagance never clearer in The B-52's than on *Planet Claire*.

Soft Cell are rightfully and righteously everywhere, farewell single *Soul Inside* nestling next to two Marc And The Mambas epics on CD4's round-up of acts who actually played at The Batcave, while Dave Ball's rare solo song *Strict Tempo* is an excellently unhinged offering.

The final CD, of artists who influenced The Batcave and goth in general, is less surefooted. No-one is doubting the excellence of Roxy Music, The Sweet or Cockney Rebel, but they seem out of place among the more obviously influential eccentrics like Suicide, New York Dolls and Jayne County.

That gripe is to pick scabs from a boxset that, above everything, is impishly fun. As with the emo scene that followed, *Young Limbs Rise Again* is at its best when it's either being heroically disgusted, like The Glove, or wonkily elbowing its way onto the dancefloor, as with The Revillos.

A gorgeously packaged document of a powerfully hypnotic scene. **JE**

A-HA
HUNTING HIGH AND LOW

BMG

★★★★★

© Getty

If a-ha's iconic debut album seemed to mark the arrival of a fully-formed musical phenomenon – setting the template for an irresistible mix of pop hooks and windswept Nordic gloom that still serves them well to this day – then this 60-track, 6LP document of its troubled gestation (originally released on CD back in 2015) lets fascinating daylight in on the magic.

The evolution of *Take On Me* is emblematic of just how far the trio had travelled between the song's 1982 incarnation as the screechy, plinky-plonky *Lesson One* and the globe-conquering Alan Tarney retool that's still a contender – and this is not a sentence *Classic Pop* uses lightly – for the best single of the 80s. Seriously, is there any greater advertisement for the alchemic powers of a good producer?

Early demos including Norwegian language *Så Blåser Det På Jorden* and the Beatlesque nursery rhyme of *Presenting Lily Mars* offer further insights into the band in utero, while extended versions, alternate mixes and B-sides fill out the rest of the bonus 10 sides.

The album itself, needless to say, remains a timeless gem, from the yearning sigh of its title track to the driving, wall of sound energy of *The Sun Always Shines On TV*, whose status as a-ha's only UK chart-topper (going one better than *Take On Me*) continues to confound *Popmaster* contestants on a regular basis. Even the weakest links – see the ballad *And You Tell Me* and the heavily sequenced *Love Is Reason*, which sounds like a proto-Stock Aitken Waterman effort – are only guilty of being merely a bit ordinary.

A 64-page booklet featuring extensive liner notes and photographs – the better to showcase *those* cheekbones – ensures that this latest package looks as handsome as it sounds. A bit like a-ha themselves (but don't tell them we said so.)

Paul Kirkley

VARIOUS
NOW YEARBOOK '86/NOW DANCE: THE 80s/NOW YEARBOOK '80-'84: THE FINAL CHAPTER – EXTRA

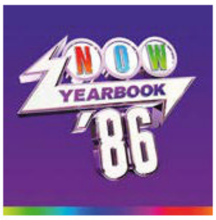
NOW

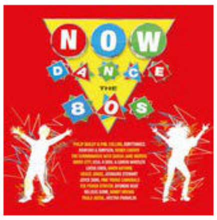
★★★★½ / ★★★★★ / ★★★★★

© Getty

It's official: NOW never stop. And thank heavens they don't. For these two months they're issuing yet more wonderful collections to delight. First up, *Yearbook '86*, a 12-month period that has often been seen as quite a rum year for 80s pop what with the rise of gloopy balladeers Chris De Burgh, Boris Gardiner and Nick Berry and once-reliable big-hitters either splitting (Wham!) or downsizing (Duran Duran). BUT WAIT! It also heralded the arrival of pop's new guard (Five Star, a-ha, The Communards) alongside frightwigs (Sigue Sigue Sputnik), perv codpieces (Cameo), hip-hop superstars (Run-DMC), barmy foreigners (Falco) and hair metal (Bon Jovi, Europe). Added to that were the first signs of homegrown house (Mel & Kim) and swoonsome heartthrobs (Nick Kamen, The Bangles) all finding a home in the charts and on this splendid 80-track 4CD (or 43-track 3LP) round-up.

Instead of full-on reissues of the *NOW Dance* collections, the team have put together the rather wonderful *NOW Dance The 80s* as a 48-track 4CD/24-track 3LP, with highlights from the first three in the series, cherry-picking such fine reswizzles of Phil Collins & Philip Bailey's *Easy Lover*, Soul II Soul's *Keep On Movin'*, Neneh Cherry's *Buffalo Stance* and the unavailable elsewhere mix of Eurythmics' *Would I Lie To You*. It even comes in a sleeve based on the 1986 edition, which is the sort of attention to detail that will please everyone.





The 63-track 3CD *NOW Yearbook '80-'84: The Final Chapter – Extra* mops up what's left of that period – though we've thought that before with the *Yearbooks*' previous exhaustive ear.

There are smashes like *I Want To Break Free*, *It's My Party*, *Do Nothing* and *Don't Stop Believin'*. The latter wasn't originally big in Britain, but is now the UK's most-streamed track from 1981 "thanks" to *Glee*. NOW's pop-mop has also got right into the corners with oft-unheard gems from Windjammer, Working Week and even Belle & The Devotions. Truly essential. Again! **IW**

DE LA SOUL
3FT HIGH AND RISING

CHRYSALIS

★★★★½

Once dubbed the '*Sgt Pepper* of hip-hop', such is the 'throw everything at the wall and see what sticks' diversity of this game-changing rap landmark it's more accurately De La Soul's 'White Album'. The Long Island trio's 1989 debut was a whole sonic universe in itself, and one which flew in the face of gangsta rap's aggressive rise.

As De La Soul regain control over their back catalogue after years of legal wrangles, *3ft High And Rising* returns here as a straight 23-track reissue. With the multitude of additional material and remixes available, surely an expanded boxset can't be off the table in the future, too. That said, such is the generosity of ideas contained on *3ft High...*, few listeners could come away from the original thinking they've been short-changed.

Dazzling turntablism and pop nous coalesce on the standouts *The Magic Number, Say No Go* and *Eye Know* but De La Soul also excel at groove-based tunes such as *Take It Off* and the funky, horn-infused *Change In Speak*.

Amid the humorous skits, they could also get serious on hard-hitting tracks like *Ghetto Thang*. Meanwhile, *De La Orgee* prompts acid flashback-style memories of this writer's teenage self hovering over the volume control in case his parents heard its X-rated sex noises. **Steve Harnell**

MADNESS
THE LIBERTY OF NORTON FOLGATE

BMG

★★★★½

One of Madness' stone-cold classics, 2009's *The Liberty Of Norton Folgate* is essentially their guide to London, named after a suburb where the laws of the Crown officially don't apply.

And the usual rules certainly don't apply to Madness, not least that arguably their greatest all-round album should arrive 30 years into their career and a decade after their previous LP of new songs, *Wonderful*.

The stereotype against producers Clive Langer and Alan Winstanley is that they focus all their attention on the singles and let album tracks drift. That certainly doesn't apply here, with the arrangements textured throughout. The whole band are at their peak, too, meaning we get Suggs at his most wistful on *Forever Young* and *That Close*, Cathal Smyth bullish on *We Are London* and Mike Barson gleefully sinister in among the elegance of Rhoda Dakar collaboration *On The Town*.

The latest in Madness' vinyl reissue run, this is the first to be expanded: Side Four houses seven unreleased songs, *One Fine Day* and *Mission From Hell* being especially fun. Add in new interviews on the sleevenotes and this is a great example of how vinyl catalogue releases should be handled, for an album deserving all the love lavished on it here. **JE**

VARIOUS
STEVEN WILSON PRESENTS INTRIGUE: PROGRESSIVE SOUNDS IN UK ALTERNATIVE MUSIC 1979-89

EDSEL/DEMON

★★★★½

Like the cool older sibling you never had, Steven Wilson explores the post-punk decade through his favoured progressive lens on this 4CD/7LP "mixtape". (There's also an edited 2LP set.)

Beginning with the angst, atonal guitars and menace of late-70s/early-80s bands like Wire, PiL and Gang Of Four, Wilson then traces a fascinating path to the sophisticated late-80s art-pop of This Mortal Coil, The The and the perennially underrated Kitchens Of Distinction.

This isn't exclusively indie: Ultravox, Simple Minds and OMD all surface, too. Wilson highlights the era's innovation, avoiding the obvious in favour of almost entirely startling, less familiar gems, among them Joy Division's funereal *The Eternal*, XTC's *Complicated Game*, and Tears For Fears' yearning *Memories Fade*. He finds space, too, for leftfield picks such as Durutti Column's brittle *Sketch For Summer* and Cardiacs' manic *R.E.S.* Wilson's own No-Man's *Night Sky, Sweet Earth* is also at home alongside David Sylvian's *Brilliant Trees*, Thomas Dolby's *Airwaves* and The Associates' *White Car In Germany*. Illuminating and engrossing, this is how compilations should be. **WW**

PETER SCHILLING
COMING HOME: 40 YEARS OF MAJOR TOM

WARNER

★★★★

When Peter Schilling first broke through in 1983, it was impossible to miss the parallels between him and David Bowie – most obviously because of Schilling's hit, *Major Tom (Coming Home)*, which served as a sequel of sorts to *Space Oddity*. Besides that, the German musician also favours an eclectic, Bowie-esque approach, with emphasis on synth-pop and darkwave electro, merging with everything including reggae.

This comprehensive Best Of underscores that Schilling excels at those first two styles while remains committed to staying up with current trends, judging by the ambient gothic vibe of 2021's *Wyoming Syndrome* and the pulsating electronics of new song *World Hold On*.

Covering both his English and German language music, the 2CD edition includes hits such as the clubby *The Different Story (World Of Lust And Crime)* alongside some remastered tunes (a lovely version of *City Of Night (Berlin)* and *(Into Your...) DNA*, in English for the first time).

It also features multiple versions of *Major Tom*, including one in Spanish and two orchestral takes. The 4CD deluxe edition adds both the English and German versions of 1983 debut LP *Error In The System*, as well as remixes, single edits and live tracks. **Annie Zaleski**

THE AUTEURS
PEOPLE 'ROUND HERE DON'T LIKE TO TALK ABOUT IT

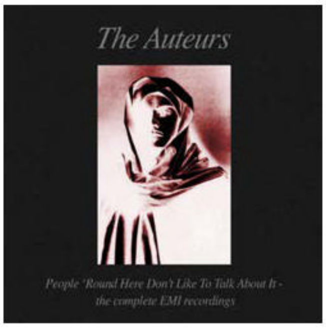
CHERRY RED

★★★

One of music's best/worst self-saboteurs, Luke Haines' most well-known folly is compiled in a 6CD boxset showing both why they were contenders and how, despite his claims, it wasn't Britpop's fault The Auteurs never commercially matched 1993's Mercury-nominated debut, *New Wave*. That was a brilliant album, with sinister humour wrapped inside glam, bubblegum and, yes, New Wave. But he took its failure to break through very badly. The following *Now I'm A Cowboy* housed his finest hour, *Lenny Valentino*, but it stalled at No.41.

A furious Haines promptly marched to the back of the class and began drawing a cock and balls over and over again. *After Murder Park* and *How I Learned To Love The Bootboys* had flashes of brilliance, but shock tactics were taking over, especially on the intervening side-project LP, *Baader Meinhof*, empty and ugly under its hypnotic iconography.

The Auteurs signed off with 2003's *Das Capital*, re-recording 12 songs when surely no-one had asked them to. It was a gesture increasingly typical of Haines' truculence. The boxset adds B-sides and demos, but frustratingly omits the remix EP *Vs µ-Ziq*, a techno collaboration that The Auteurs could have excelled in exploring further. **JE**



SHEENA EASTON
TAKE MY TIME

CHERRY POP

★★★

Arguably the first true reality TV pop star, Sheena Easton released her 1981 debut album off the back of an appearance on Esther Rantzen's wish fulfilment series *The Big Time*. Unlike the conveyor belt of Simon Cowell discoveries that followed, the Glaswegian wasn't saddled with an uninspired collection of covers and identikit ballads that screamed "This'll do."

Running the gamut from Olivia Newton John-esque adult contemporary (*Voice On The Radio*) and twinkling R&B (*So Much In Love*) to country-blues (*Cry*) and even barroom rock (*Prisoner*), Easton's debut, *Take My Time*, is instead a largely original affair, in which Dollar producer Christopher Neil gave her the chance to find her voice.

Cherry Red's latest edition in Easton's reissue series proves her B-sides were just as eclectic: check out the seductive bossa nova of *Summer's Over*.

The new additions on the CD/DVD package suggest the budget had been blown in the studio: of the album's four videos, only the promo for US No.1 *9 To 5* looks like it cost more than £9.50. Instrumentals of the latter and slow-burning hit *Modern Girl* continue the cheap and cheerful vibes. But the hitherto unreleased, ELO-esque *Have You Heard The Rumour* explains why the Grammys, James Bond and Prince came a-calling. **Jon O'Brien**

THE PALE FOUNTAINS
PACIFIC STREET/...FROM ACROSS THE KITCHEN TABLE

UMC/PROPER

★★★★½ / ★★★★★

One of Britain's finest songwriters, Michael Head has finally begun receiving his due since returning after an 11-year gap with 2017's sumptuous *Adios Senor Pussycat.* The time is right to rediscover his story, with his first band The Pale Fountains' two albums getting straight vinyl reissues.

Both albums missed the Top 75, but 1984's *Pacific Street* showed Head arrived fully formed. There are glimpses of current Head and his subsequent band Shack's beautiful acoustic pop. Here too are more regular jangly melodies and, on *Unless*, a moving precursor to Black's *Sweetest Smile*. There's even Head going full-on punk roustabout on *Usual*.

Produced by Ian Broudie, '85's *...From Across The Kitchen Table* is more streamlined. *Pacific Street* had hints of Head's fascination with bossa nova and its sequel saw a more unlikely excursion into Britfunk on *27 Ways To Get Back Home*.

Jean's Not Happening is a staple of 'Best Obscure 80s Singles' compilations, while chiming closer *September Sting* segues into Shack and The Strands' search for the perfect melody which has epitomised Head's career since.

Bolstered by future James trumpeter Andy Diagram, it remains a mystery why The Pale Fountains weren't huge, a feeling that's remained since *Pacific Street* heralded a true maverick. **JE**

CARTER THE UNSTOPPABLE SEX MACHINE
30 SOMETHING

CHRYSALIS

★★★

One of the ultimate T-shirt bands, the sleeve of Carter USM's second album is a Proustian rush for anyone aged over 45. Anyone younger is likely to be mystified: Jim Bob and Fruitbat's music has been lost in the post-grunge/pre-Britpop wilderness and their sequencers' primitivism mean they're unlikely to get revived.

This 3CD/1DVD boxset of 1991's commercial breakthrough deserves the deluxe treatment, for social history as much as pun-driven tunes whose DIY exuberance masked political lyrics rare at the time. Britain's post-Thatcher era had generally settled into numbed boredom rather than protesting fire, but that didn't stop Carter being early chroniclers of the Army's mistreatment of new recruits in *Bloodsport For All*, or *Billy's Smart Circus* raging against potential destruction of the NHS.

A ubiquitous Top 10 hit, by the end of *30 Something* Carter were headlining Glastonbury, a rise documented with a Kilburn National show on CD3. CD2 mostly consists of live cuts and B-sides, while the DVD is a re-release for documentary and VHS rarity, *In Bed With Carter.*

Their influence lives on in Sleaford Mods, and if *30 Something* hasn't aged well, at the time they were a necessary isolated presence. **JE**

MARIANNE FAITHFULL
KISSIN' TIME
BMG
★★★

Capitalising on Marianne Faithfull's Daniel Lanois-produced LP *Vagabond Ways* ushering her back into the limelight, a stellar guestlist assembled in 2002. Jarvis Cocker and Beck perfectly caught her freewheeling nihilism, but Billy Corgan bludgeoned her and Blur's title track was sloppy rather than louche. At least this reissue – with seven bonus CD tracks and a first-time vinyl release – sees The Freelance Hellraiser bring genuine funk to that Blur jazz on his unreleased mix. The pick is Dave Stewart's *Song For Nico*, touching and acerbic. **JE**

GARY NUMAN
PURE/SCARRED
EARMUSIC
★★★½ / ★★★★½

In 2000, Gary Numan was in no mood to celebrate Jesus' Big Birthday: his 14th studio album *Pure* – now reissued as a double vinyl set – was the third in an unholy trinity that had Christian dogma firmly in its crosshairs. Recorded live at Brixton Academy, 2003's *Scarred* found Numan mixing *Pure*'s industrial rock with crowdpleasing hits, including *Cars* and *Are 'Friends' Electric?* Its re-release comes in the form of two white vinyl discs – presumably in honour of the colour absolutely no-one was wearing on the night. **PK**

WHITNEY HOUSTON
WHITNEY HOUSTON/ WHITNEY
SONY
★★★★ / ★★★★★

Perhaps timed to coincide with the big-screen biopic, Whitney's debut and equally unimaginatively titled follow-up are the first of five vinyl reissues in 2023. Both remain masterclasses in 80s diva pop, with the former's power ballads (*Saving All My Love For You, Greatest Love Of All*) paving the way for Mariah and Celine, and the latter's party starters (*So Emotional, I Wanna Dance With Somebody*) confirming she could convey joy as well as heartbreak. No additional material means only casual fans need bother. **JO**

BOW WOW WOW
WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH, THE TOUGH GET GOING
MUSIC ON VINYL
★★½

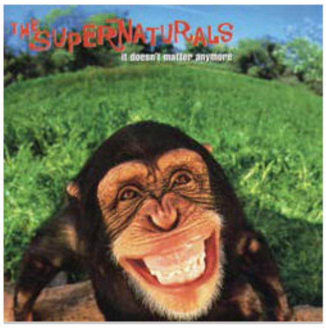
Absent from streaming platforms, Bow Wow Wow's second album now returns via this vinyl reissue. The last LP with the original ex-Ants, producer Mike Chapman brought cohesion, less reliant on the Afrobeats of *See Jungle...* Now 40 years on, *Roustabout* and *The Man Mountain* see Annabella Lwin and Matthew Ashman sound equally excitable, while David Barbarossa and Leigh Gorman's rhythm flies on *Quiver*. However, for all their energy, they rarely gelled. **JE**

THE SOUP DRAGONS
RAW TV PRODUCTS
PAST NIGHT FROM GLASGOW
★★★★½

Long before their singer became HiFi Sean, and a few years before they were unfairly considered baggy one-hit-wonders, fans knew The Soup Dragons were actually an ever-evolving riot of garage rackets and cardiganed psychedelia, as the Glasgow quartet lit up *The Chart Show*'s Indie Chart with a string of C-86 jangles. Now, this collection of singles and rarities from 1985-88 adds context, collecting classics such as *Hang-Ten!, Soft As Your Face* and *The Majestic Head?* alongside Peel sessions and live tracks, for a cracking compilation of a genuinely brilliant band. **IW**

VARIOUS
MUSIK MUSIC MUSIQUE 3.0
CHERRY RED
★★★★

This electronic pop deep dive focuses on 1982, a pivotal year for synths in the charts. Although the 56-track collection features several success stories (Heaven 17's *Let Me Go!*, New Order's *Temptation*, Tears for Fears' *Pale Shelter*), the 3CD set is an even more engaging look at keyboard music's esoteric corners. Psychedelic rock icon Arthur Brown offers up the minimalist, quirky *Conversations* while Scottish group Those French Girls chime in with the catchy, Thomas Dolby-esque *Sorry Sorry* and Julie And The Jems put a New Wave spin on 60s soul hit *1-2-3*. **AZ**



THE SUPERNATURALS
IT DOESN'T MATTER ANYMORE
PAST NIGHT FROM GLASGOW
★★★★

Seemingly the archetypal good-time Britpop band, Glasgow quintet The Supernaturals reached No.9 with their debut in 1997, thanks to catchily simple hits *Lazy Lover* and *Smile*. The latter has been a staple on TV ads since. Their darker moments have fared just as well, glimpses of singer James McColl's melancholy under the shininess in a similarly contrasting extreme as labelmates Blur. Largely forgotten now, this straight vinyl reissue deserves to have their dual personality reassessed, even while *Smile* is doubtless advertising a holiday getaway right now somewhere. **JE**

THE HIDDEN CAMERAS
THE SMELL OF OUR OWN
ROUGH TRADE
★★★★

The perfect midpoint between Scissor Sisters' euphoria and The Magnetic Fields' sternness, Toronto's The Hidden Cameras were LGBT pioneers built on the ever inventive Joel Gibb. *Boys Of Melody* and *Breathe On It* were riotous retro rock'n'roll, peaking on *Ban Marriage*'s dayglo chant against conformity. *Shame* and *The Man That I Am With My Man* showed Gibb could be starkly beautiful, while B-sides *Heavy Flow Of Evil* and *Fear Of 'Zine Failure*, among 10 bonus tracks on this 20th anniversary edition, prove the collective had ideas flowing from every pore. **JE**

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THE CURE
CARDIFF INTERNATIONAL ARENA

8 DECEMBER 2022

★★★★★

SETLIST

1. Alone
2. Pictures Of You
3. Closedown
4. At Night
5. A Night Like This
6. Lovesong
7. And Nothing Is Forever
8. The Last Day Of Summer
9. A Fragile Thing
10. Burn
11. A Strange Day
12. Push
13. Play For Today
14. Shake Dog Shake
15. From The Edge Of The Deep Green Sea
16. Endsong

ENCORE

17. I Can Never Say Goodbye
18. Trust
19. Faith
20. A Forest

ENCORE 2

21. Lullaby
22. The Walk
23. Friday I'm In Love
24. Close To Me
25. In Between Days
26. Just Like Heaven
27. Boys Don't Cry

A NIGHT LIKE THIS IN WALES PROVES WELL WORTH THE WAIT FOR FANS, AS THE CURE SHOWCASE *SONGS OF A LOST WORLD* DURING A CAREER-SPANNING SET

As the sound of rain echoes and lighting flashes to match the intermittent rumble of thunder, dry ice floods the stage to set the scene for show number 40 of The Cure's mammoth 44-date Lost World European Tour.

While the rest of the band emerges slowly from the shadows to take their place on stage, frontman Robert Smith wanders to the front where he purposefully gazes into the crowd to personally thank and acknowledge every member of the audience. As the singer steps back to join his colleagues, a brooding instrumental intro gives way to *Alone*, the first of five new tracks which we'd later be promised, "won't be new for much longer."

Set to appear on the much-anticipated *Songs Of A Lost World* album, fans greeted fresh numbers like *A Fragile Thing*, *And Nothing Is Forever*, *Endsong*, and *I Can Never Say Goodbye*, as if they were already prime Cure classics. From the teasers we're treated to, it's destined to be a delightfully dark collection of sizeable songs.

Coming some 15 long years after their last offering, 2008's *4:13 Dream*, it would appear that good things will come to those who wait. Indeed, when Smith coyly acknowledges, "Hello again, it's been what, 26 years?", one feels like the frontman is acutely aware that concerts like this have been a long time coming.

While Smith has been taking his time perfecting The Cure's 14th studio album there's also no real sense of urgency in this performance. Both band and fans soak in each sumptuous second of the evening's set, which encompasses every shade of The Cure's rich spectrum.

"I hope my voice holds up," the singer modestly admits, "but if it doesn't, I know you'll know all the words". Given the joyous rapture that greets the likes of *Pictures Of You*, *Lovesong*, *Lullaby*, *A Night Like This*, *Push*, *Close To Me* and *In Between Days*, from two of the band's most celebrated releases, 1989's *Disintegration* and 1985's *The Head On The Door*, one suspects he could be right. Not that Smith need be concerned, despite illness or tour fatigue, his impassioned vocals still soar over these timeless melodies.

It's an evening of contrasts which sees the glacial likes of *A Forest* and *Play For Today* from 1980's spiky sophomore *Seventeen Seconds* perfectly complement the multi-tonal lushness of *From The Edge Of The Deep Green Sea* and *Trust* from 1992's *Wish*.

While favourites such as *Faith*, *A Strange Day*, *The Last Day Of Summer* and a belting *Burn*, serve as highlights in an already epic setlist, The Cure still have a 'best of' encore hidden up their collective sleeves.

Having already passed the two-hour mark, they then unveil the likes of *The Walk*, *Friday I'm In Love*, *Just Like Heaven* and *Boys Don't Cry* during a technicolour sign-off to one spectacular show. Let's hope that we won't have to wait too long for more. **Dan Biggane**

© Dave Freak

BELINDA CARLISLE
SYMPHONY HALL, BIRMINGHAM

3 FEBRUARY

★★★★★

THE GO-GO'S FRONTWOMAN AND SOLO STAR BELATEDLY RESTARTS HER CELEBRATORY DECADES TOUR WITH A FAULTLESS PERFORMANCE OF CROWD-PLEASING HITS

We haven't seen as much of Belinda Carlisle as we should have recently. Firstly, Covid initially put paid to her Decades tour back in 2021. Then the reunited Go-Go's were unable to make Billy Idol's 2022 Roadside arena jaunt when dates were moved. All we saw of her was a few summer festival spots.

However, the lower profile only seems to have raised expectations. The majority of this rescheduled 15-date Decades run, which belatedly marks her 35 years as a solo artist, has sold out well in advance – including tonight's 2,200-capacity opening gig in Birmingham. Belinda, it seems, is hot property (again)!

But before she appears, Liverpool's The Christians get a chance to warm us up. Although there's a looseness to the earlier part of their set and the sound balance could be better, their soulful pop goes down well. *Ideal World* in particular earns a big cheer, while *Hooverville* is strong, yet it's their concluding cover of The Isley Brothers' *Harvest For The World* which gets the warmest welcome.

Before departing, Garry Christian confesses that he's had a secret crush on Belinda for years. Judging by the euphoric welcome she receives half-an-hour later as she drifts onto the stage to *(We Want) The Same Thing*, he's not alone.

Over the next 90 minutes, the barefooted singer never pauses for breath. Spinning between an almost static band and encouraging the crowd to clap along, she only breaks for a few brief introductions describing 1996's *Deep Devotion* as "one of the deeper cuts" tonight, and namechecking the late George Harrison as among her many collaborators alongside The Beach Boys and Fleetwood Mac's Lindsey Buckingham. She also declares her favourite solo album to be 1989's *Runaway Horses*, selecting the "very romantic" *Summer Rain* as a particular highlight.

Sure, the setlist leans heavily towards those crowd-pleasing 20th century releases when a swift back catalogue dive, or more recent tunes, might have been a nice treat for the hardcore fans. But the air-tight band is totally on the money throughout, and the svelte and graceful Carlisle oozes a relaxed and sophisticated charm, sounding as clear and fresh as she ever did. It all results in what can only be described as a faultless performance. Welcome back Belinda, we've missed you.

Dave Freak

SETLIST

1. (We Want) The Same Thing
2. Do You Feel Like I Feel?
3. In Too Deep
4. Deep Deep Ocean
5. I Get Weak
6. Circle In The Sand
7. La Luna
8. Summer Rain
9. Should I Let You In?
10. Fool For Love
11. Mad About You
12. Big Scary Animal
13. Leave A Light On
14. Heaven Is A Place On Earth

ENCORE 1

15. Emotional Highway
16. A Woman And A Man
17. Live Your Life Be Free

ENCORE 2

18. Vision Of You

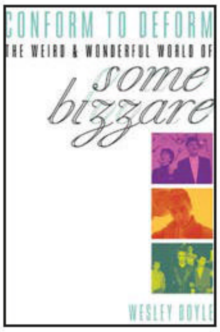
CONFORM TO DEFORM: THE WEIRD & WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOME BIZZARE

WESLEY DOYLE

JAWBONE PRESS

★★★★

As the old adage goes, truth is stranger than fiction, and nothing gives that more credence than this exhilarating journey documenting one of the 80s' most successful, influential and, as its name suggests, bizarre record labels. With a manifesto to carry out the unexpected – the label, helmed by maverick Stevo Pearce, provided a hotbed of creativity for musical misshapes to thrive, launching the careers of Depeche Mode, Soft Cell, The The and Cabaret Voltaire among others.



Having interviewed a vast array of artists, producers, writers, photographers, designers – basically anyone who inhabited the world of Some Bizzare, Wesley Doyle weaves those conversations together to deliver a superb oral history like a non-stop exotic cavalcade of musical misdemeanours taking in New York clubland, tropical jungles and Soho sex dens.

Aside from Stevo, Vince Clarke, Marc Almond, Daniel Miller and Matt Johnson all offer insights – the format proves particularly effective as it offers different perspectives on how various people interpreted situations. Case in point, Stevo and Miller still don't agree on how Depeche Mode signed to Mute instead of Some Bizzare. *Conform To Deform* promises weird and wonderful and delivers in spades. **Mark Lindores**

LEAD SISTER

LUCY O' BRIEN

NINE EIGHT BOOKS

★★★★

While very few would disagree that Karen Carpenter was one of the greatest pop vocalists of all time, that description can often seem reductive, diminishing so many other attributes that the superstar possessed. Here, Lucy O'Brien sets out to rectify that oversight in her latest scintillating study, *Lead Sister*. Four decades after Carpenter's untimely passing at the age of just 32 from complications associated with anorexia, the author looks at her life and legacy with a new perspective, thanks to contributions from those that knew the woman behind the musical masquerade.

Frequently cast as the tragic, unassuming sidekick to her brother, O'Brien reframes Karen's narrative in a way that has rarely, if ever, been done before. She highlights her talents as not only the superb interpreter of song we all knew her to be, but also as a forthright drummer, producer and arranger. Portraying Carpenter as very much an equal in of one of pop's most successful partnerships, *Lead Sister* prompts us to question why Carpenter is rarely included in the conversation of pioneering women of the late 70s alongside Stevie Nicks, Debbie Harry, Chrissie Hynde et al.

Music aside, Karen Carpenter's personal struggles and her battle with anorexia are also documented, shedding light on subjects such as body-shaming and mental illness, which are only now being taken seriously.

An enthralling interpretation of a story cut tragically short. **ML**

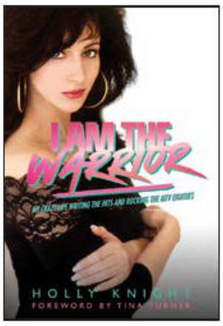
I AM THE WARRIOR: MY CRAZY LIFE WRITING THE HITS AND ROCKING THE MTV EIGHTIES

HOLLY KNIGHT

PERMUTED PRESS

★★★

If Holly Knight's name may not be instantly familiar, you can bet that her music will be. Over the past four decades, she's penned songs such as Animotion's *Obsession* and Pat Benatar's *Love Is A Battlefield*, as well as nine tracks for her muse, Tina Turner (who provides a foreword in the book) including *The Best* and *Better Be Good To Me*.



Though her music spans synth-pop to her favoured hard rock, its common denominator is the theme of fighting for something, the reason for which becomes apparent through *I Am The Warrior*.

With music being her great love from learning piano at the age of four, Knight's ambition to make a living from it was met with resistance at every turn. She meets the challenges head on along the way, whether it was being part of a rock group, Spider, or moving to L.A. and infiltrating a boy's club of writers to prove herself as a songsmith for everyone from Tina to Kiss, Bon Jovi and Rod Stewart.

Described as a love letter to the 80s and MTV – when her career flourished – Holly's is an inspirational tale of grit and tenacity littered with behind-the-scenes anecdotes. *I Am The Warrior* is like speeding down memory lane on the back of a motorcycle. **ML**

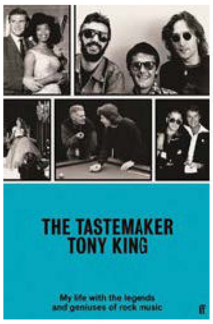
THE TASTEMAKER: MY LIFE WITH THE LEGENDS AND GENIUSES OF ROCK MUSIC

TONY KING

FABER & FABER

★★★★

With more than 60 years in the music business, Tony King has witnessed the industry change beyond recognition and played an integral role in the careers of everyone from The Beatles and Rolling Stones to Queen and Ed Sheeran, taking in a stint as one of the most powerful figures of the disco scene in late 70s New York along the way. To paraphrase the words of his longest-standing client and close friend Elton John, it's a miracle that King is still standing, such is his life experience.



Because music has been the defining force in Tony's life, it would be impossible for him to tell his story without including his famous friends. From being in the studio with The Beatles, on the road with the Stones, taking Elton to his first gay club and hitting New York's nightspots with Freddie Mercury, King has seen it all and, one suspects, a lot more besides than he discloses in his respectful account.

As with all great stories, the highs are balanced by lows and the recollections of AIDS ravaging his circle of friends are particularly haunting, as is his account of his own struggles with survivor's guilt due to being diagnosed HIV positive much later when medical advancements meant it was no longer a death sentence. A candid, fascinating account of a life well lived. **ML**

CLASSIC POP MOMENTS

DURAN DURAN RELEASE THEIR FIRST CHART-TOPPING SINGLE IN THE UK

14 MARCH 1983

A standalone single that bridged the gap in between their *Rio* and *Seven And The Ragged Tiger* studio albums, *Is There Something I Should Know?* would net Duran Duran their first ever UK No.1.

Recorded at Tony Visconti's Good Earth Studios in Soho with producer Ian Little, the track would go through various iterations until the group were happy with it, with a final, apparently punchier mix being overseen by Alex Sadkin – who would co-helm *Seven And The Ragged Tiger* – and Phil Thornalley at RAK Studios. Duran guitarist Andy Taylor claimed that it was the band's fastest-selling 7" and their quickest to write, apparently the five-piece penned it in just 10 minutes.

Propelled by a silky, stylised video directed by regular collaborator Russell Mulcahy, the song also became a hit in the United States, peaking at No.4 on the Billboard Hot 100. It proved so popular that, in North America, the track was added to a re-release of the band's self-titled debut album. In the UK, the song entered the singles chart at No.1. Reviews were glowing, with *Cash Box* praising "the upbeat arrangement, clear production and lustrous vocals" while *Smash Hits* noted that the song displayed a "more pronounced rock group sound." **Steve O'Brien**

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